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Samantha Allen	Date

Feeling Fetishes: Toward an Affective Theory of Sexuality

By

Samantha Allen
Doctor of Philosophy

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

_____
Elizabeth Wilson
Advisor

_____
Lynne Huffer
Committee Member

_____
Michael Moon
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

Feeling Fetishes: Toward an Affective Theory of Sexuality

By

Samantha Allen
B.A., Rutgers University, 2010

Advisor: Elizabeth Wilson, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

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By Samantha Allen

Sexual fetishism has played a critical role in the development of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct that underlies sexological, psychological, and psychoanalytic theories of sexuality and yet it cannot be adequately described by those same theories. In this dissertation, I develop an affective theory of human sexuality grounded in the work of psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins that can understand sexual fetishism not as a deviation of the drive or sexual instinct but rather as a complex affective engagement with objects, practices, and ideas. This dissertation seeks both to advance sexual fetishism as an object of study for contemporary feminist and queer theory and to position Tomkins as a rich but underutilized resource for the study of sexuality. I will argue that the conceptual subordination of the drive or sexual instinct to Tomkins' affect system would have radical consequences for queer and feminist approaches to sexual variation.

In the Introduction, I argue via Michel Foucault that sexual fetishism helps to generate modern theories of sexuality from Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* to the work of Sigmund Freud. I observe that drive-foundational theories of sexuality have precluded an exploration of sexuality as affect. In Chapter One, I construct an affective theory of sexuality using Tomkins' *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* in order to issue a challenge the conceptual primacy accorded to the drive or sexual instinct. In Chapter Two, I apply this theory of sexuality to a wide range of fetish literature including a psychological report on erotic vomiting; an Internet forum for sneezing fetishists; a selection mid twentieth-century aversion therapy research; as well as late twentieth-century fetish newsletters from the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. In Chapter Three, I argue that reading sexual fetishism and other forms of sexual variation through the lens of a weak affective theory would run counter to a tendency of feminist and queer theory to use the category of perversion for illocutionary ends.

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Introduction
Why Fetishism?

Why Tomkins?[1]

In his multi-volume work *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, mid twentieth-century psychologist Silvan Tomkins makes a powerful case that affects—not drives—are central to human motivation.[2] To assert the importance of affects, however, Tomkins must work against the historical undervaluation of their importance in his field; as he notes, affects have typically been regarded in psychology as "something vestigial which might have been useful somewhere in man's distant past."[3] In this dissertation, I detail the conceptual consequences of inverting the relative importance of drives and affects for theories of human sexuality. In particular, I choose to analyze sexual fetishism through the lens of Tomkins' theory in order to construct an initial theory of sexuality that is rooted in affect rather than being founded in a concept of a sex drive or sexual instinct. As I will argue in this Introduction, sexual fetishism has played a critical role in the development of drive-foundational theories of sexuality and, as such, it can serve as a productive starting point for a theory of sexuality rooted in affects instead. Not only can sexual fetishism provide rich material to prove the viability of a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality, it is also a logical place to begin to contest the conceptual primacy frequently assigned to the drive.

At the onset, however, I want to observe that Tomkins, much like the affects he detailed, has been implicitly regarded as being more useful in the past than in the present.

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[1] This dissertation was supported by the John Money Fellowship for Scholars of Sexology awarded by the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, and by Professional Development Support Funds provided by Laney Graduate School, Emory University.
[2] Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008).
[3] Ibid., 23.

To be sure, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* marks an important moment in the critical trend known as the "affective turn." Through Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's co-edited Tomkins reader *Shame and its Sisters*,[4] Tomkins has played a crucial if posthumous role in popularizing affect in queer studies and in the critical humanities writ large. But Tomkins' work is more than a moment and the full resources of his voluminous text have yet to be thoroughly explored. Although Tomkins is frequently hailed as one of the progenitors of the booming sub-discipline of affect theory, his work has not yet enjoyed widespread circulation or sustained critical engagement beyond *Shame and its Sisters*, Sedgwick's other work, and a handful of other emerging publications. As Elizabeth Wilson and Adam Frank note in a recent issue of *Critical Inquiry*:

> [T]here is almost no sustained commentary on, or use of, Tomkins's work in the critical humanities. Irrespective of whether one is part of the affective turn or rallying against it, there is very little engagement with the particulars of Tomkins's theory. Most often, in fact, Tomkins's theoretical claims are gleaned from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's writings rather than Tomkins himself …[5]

The specific contours of Tomkins' work are often left unexamined, the broad brushstrokes of his arguments gleaned through Sedgwick's insightful interpretive work instead. Much of the current work in affect theory, too, draws primarily from a tradition that extends, most notably, from the work of Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze to that of Brian Massumi.[6] In this philosophical tradition, affects are read as "intensities" that circulate within and between bodies and environments[7] or as a marker of the "priority of

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[4] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
[5] Adam Frank and Elizabeth A. Wilson, "Like-Minded," *Critical Inquiry* 38 (2012): 873.
[6] See Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
[7] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

experience"[8] whereas Tomkins reads affect in a more psychological tradition, drawing primary influence from the work of Charles Darwin and William James. As compared with the philosophical tradition of affect, Tomkins' more literal understanding of affect may be seen as too literal, too quaint, or even—ironically enough—vestigial.

Where Tomkins has certainly played an influential role is as an undercurrent in the queer turn to shame. In the late 1990s, the radical queer critique of Gay Pride's commercialism and liberalism took the shape of an anti-assimilationist "gay shame" movement that refused the goals of mainstream gay politics. Through *Shame and its Sisters* and the essays collected in her Tomkins-inspired *Touching Feeling*,[9] Sedgwick also helped to center a Tomkinsian notion of shame in queer scholarly discourse. This queer shame moment culminated in the now-infamous 2003 Gay Shame Conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which witnessed conflict between scholars and activists around issues of race and class,[10] and in the subsequent *Gay Shame* volume edited by David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, which promised to explore "the possibility [that] reclaiming gay shame" might enable us to "create new forms of community."[11] Currently, whether it is figured as the foundation for a "cultural politics" à la Sally Munt,[12] as an affect at the intersection of blackness and queerness à la Kathryn Bond Stockton,[13] or as the counterpoint to neoliberal ideals of happiness à la Sara Ahmed,[14] queer shame remains a

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[8] Russ Leo, "An Archive for Affect Theory," *Reviews in Cultural Theory* 2, no. 2 (2011): 2.
[9] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[10] See, e.g., Jack Halberstam, "Shame and White Guy Masculinity," *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005): 219-233.
[11] David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, eds., *Gay Shame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 5.
[12] Sally Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008).
[13] Kathryn Bond Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where "Black" Meets "Queer"* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
[14] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

vibrant node of discussion within queer theory. Contemporary queer studies of affect more broadly are also proliferating, and Tomkins' work—especially his work on shame—is widely cited but relatively underexplored across most of these texts.

But shame is just one of the nine primary affects that Tomkins identifies in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* and, although it plays a key role in human sociality—as Sedgwick describes it in *Touching, Feeling*, "shame both derives from and aims toward sociability"[15]—it is not, in fact, the primary affect of human sexuality. And given the importance of sexuality as an object of study in queer scholarship as well as the frequency with which Tomkins has been cited in this work since 1995, one might reasonably wonder why Tomkins' claim that sexuality is *not* primarily characterized by a drive or sexual instinct but rather by the affects of excitement and enjoyment has not garnered more attention. Part of queer shame's utility, it seems, is that it can act as a sobering negative counterpoint to the heady positivity of Pride but, on a conceptual level, binding the study of sexuality so closely to shame leaves the explanatory richness of its positive affects to the side.

In Chapter One of this dissertation, I expand Tomkins' simple yet remarkable claim that sexuality is rooted in excitement and enjoyment into a basic template for a theory of sexuality. As I will also argue in Chapter One, affects can take other affects as objects and as such, negative affects like shame can and do play an important if ultimately subsidiary role in human sexuality—a possibility that I explore further in the readings of fetish literature found in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, I will suggest that contemporary feminist and queer theory's commitment to the concept of a sexual instinct or drive has functioned strategically to preserve the negativity of the category of

[15] Sedgwick, *Touching*, 37.

perversion at the exclusion of a thorough consideration of the positive affects at the heart of human sexuality. I will suggest that Tomkins' theory of affect—because it is a weak theory rather than a strong one—can avoid these rhetorical moves, engaging with sexual variation in a more localized and idiosyncratic register instead. At present, however, I simply want to mark the facts that the hundreds of pages in Tomkins' *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* cannot be reduced simply to a discussion of shame as filtered through Sedgwick and that Tomkins has more to offer than can be parsed through the excerpts in *Shame and its Sisters*. Tomkins' theory of affect is a rich resource for the study of sexuality that remains untapped. On a metatextual level, then, this project is an effort to put Tomkins' oft-cited but underutilized work to extended use within sexuality studies.

In the broader structure of this dissertation, I develop initial notes toward an affective theory of sexuality in Chapter One by analyzing and expanding Tomkins' relatively sparse references to sexuality throughout *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*. Throughout this chapter, I will begin to demonstrate why an affective theory of sexuality would be particularly useful for understanding sexual fetishism. In Chapter Two, I offer proof of the viability and conceptual utility of a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality in the form of various affective readings of a wide array of fetish literature: twentieth-century behaviorist literature on fetishism; a psychoanalytic treatise on erotic vomiting; a contemporary Internet sneezing fetish forum; and late twentieth-century fetish newsletters that, apart from various home collections, can only be found in the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. In Chapter Three, I will consider the potential implications of an affective theory of sexuality for the ways in which seminal feminist and queer texts have engaged with sexual fetishism and the

category of perversion more broadly. In particular, I argue that feminist theory and queer theory have both relied on the perceived transgressiveness of deviant sexualities including fetishism for illocutionary aims—aims that would be impossible to achieve if we read sexuality through productively weak, affective theories rather than through strong, drive-foundational lenses. As a complete work, then, this project moves first from building a theoretical apparatus in Chapter One to applying that apparatus in Chapter Two to a consideration of the political and conceptual consequences of the theoretical shift from drive to affect in Chapter Three.

But before I begin the constructive project of this dissertation in earnest, my goal in this Introduction is to establish the reasons for developing this Tomkinsian theory of sexuality through the lens of sexual fetishism in particular. Considering that an affective theory of sexuality would primarily be differentiated from drive-foundational theories of sexuality, I have selected a form of sexuality that bears a special relationship to the concept of the sex drive or a sexual instinct—and it is the nature of this relationship that I will articulate in this Introduction.

In the first section, "Building the Fetish" I trace the emergence of the concept of sexual fetishism in conjunction with the concept of a drive or sexual instinct from late nineteenth-century French psychology through classic British and German sexology to the work of Sigmund Freud. Throughout this review, I establish that the drive-foundational theories of sexuality in which these theories of sexual fetishism ask repetitive and primarily etiological questions of sexual fetishism. In the second section, "Dismantling the Drive" I argue that this historical intertwinement of sexual fetishism and theories of the sexual instinct is not merely circumstantial; rather I suggest, using

Michel Foucault's critique of the drive or sexual instinct, that sexual fetishism has played a crucial role in the development of the concept of a sexual instinct and, furthermore, to the deployment of sexuality itself. In the concluding section, I suggest that sexual fetishism can serve as a productive starting point for an affective theory of sexuality precisely because it has been so critical in the production of the drive-foundational theories of sexuality that precede it. If drive-foundational theories of sexuality have been built by citing sexual fetishism as conceptual justification, then demonstrating that fetishism can also be articulated within an affective theory of sexuality can serve to destabilize the foundations of those very theories.

Building the Fetish

A more general theory of fetishism predates the specific concept of sexual fetishism by several centuries. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "fetish" in its original sixteenth-century context referred to "any of the objects used by the indigenous peoples of the Guinea coast and the neighboring regions as amulets or means of enchantment, or regarded by them with superstitious dread." [16] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it acquired a more general meaning in anthropological discourse as "an inanimate object worshipped by preliterate peoples on account of its supposed inherent magical powers, or as being animated by a spirit."[17] And by the late nineteenth century—the moment when sexual fetishism first enters clinical discourse—"fetish"

[16] "fetish, n. ". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/69611 (accessed January 15, 2015).
[17] Ibid.

became a vague term with a broad scope used to describe anything "irrationally reverenced."[18]

With this broad etymological overview in mind, I want to mark that the term "fetish" is indelibly rooted in Enlightenment era ideals of reason and can only emerge, as William Pietz notes in his classic history of the term, "in the encounter of radically heterogeneous social systems."[19] Furthermore, these heterogeneous social systems have typically been marked by radical power asymmetries, whether it be colonial racism in which fetishism first emerged or the consolidation of medico-juridical power partially enabled by fetishism in the nineteenth century. As Pietz might put it, "'Fetish' has always been a word of sinister pedigree."[20] However it has been applied, "fetish" has always been used to mark a misalignment of values between those who are attached to certain objects and those who produce knowledge about and scrutinize those attachments. I will explore the contemporary continuation of this pejorative use of fetishism further in Chapter Three.

In his anthropological history of the concept, Pietz notes that "fetish"—in the form of the Portuguese "feitiço" —was first used by European traders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to describe charm objects held by inhabitants of the Guinea Coast of Africa. These traders "constantly remarked on the trinkets and trifles [the inhabitants] traded for objects of real value" and took advantage of the seeming overvaluation of certain trinkets to secure profitable trades.[21] The early missionary discourse that emerges out of this period took a more moralistic approach to the charm objects; as Valerie Steele

[18] Ibid.
[19] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish I," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (1985): 7.
[20] Ibid., 5.
[21] Ibid., 9.

observes in her own history of fetishism, early Christian tracts "denounced the 'barbarous religions of people who worshipped 'idols of wood or clay.'"[22] Through eighteenth-century travelogues, this notion of a "fetish" as an object held in irrational high esteem began to circulate in European intellectual circles; as Pietz observes, David Hume, Voltaire, Charles de Brosses, and Immanuel Kant all "read and appropriated" their notions of fetishism from "the travelogues written by northern European merchants and clerics visiting … Africa."[23] By the end of the eighteenth century, he adds, a "certain rhetoric about fetish worship had become commonplace for Enlightenment polemicists."[24]

And as the term "fetish" becomes intellectualized over the course of the nineteenth century, it begins to leave mercantile and theological discourse, entering instead into a "psychological-aesthetic discourse consistent with the emerging project of the human sciences."[25] In other words, the term "fetish" is generalized out of its specific cross-cultural context and becomes something of an all-purpose tool to describe and diagnose seemingly irrational overvaluations of objects and ideas—irrational, of course, as measured by prevailing European intellectual standards of reason. In this abstracted form, "fetishism" can easily spread into and across scholarly disciplines, most notably into modern anthropology as well as Marxist economic theory via the concept of "commodity fetishism." Marx himself clearly developed the concept of commodity

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[22] Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.
[23] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 16 (Autumn 1988): 105.
[24] Ibid., 107.
[25] Ibid., 106.

fetishism from the original sense of the term, as demonstrated by his reference to "the African fetish" in his *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*.[26]

It is during this time, too, that the concept of sexual fetishism is first introduced and—in this early literature especially—the previous contexts of the term "fetish" are readily discernible. The French psychologist Alfred Binet, for example, makes explicit reference to the original Portuguese definition of fetishism in his pioneering essay on sexual fetishism and Freud casually states that sexual fetishes are "with some justice likened to the fetishes in which savages believe that their gods are embodied."[27] Binet and Freud make it clear that sexology and psychoanalysis first understand sexual fetishism analogically through comparison to colonial contact; the term may have become more generalized by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but the memory of its initial emergence is still fresh.

And if "commodity fetishism" marks the intersection of a general "psychological-aesthetic discourse" of fetishism with Marx's particular critique of the way in which people value objects over knowledge of the means of production, "sexual fetishism" marks the intersection of this more general discourse with the development of a concept of the sexual instinct or the sex drive. In the next section of this Introduction, I will examine the emergence of this instinct through the lens of Foucauldian critique. For the purposes of this section, however, I will describe how the concept of sexual fetishism first emerges in the complex network of late nineteenth-century French psychology with the work of Alfred Binet, Jean-Martin Charcot and Valentin Magnan; classical sexology with the work of Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing; and

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[26] Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, trans. David McLellan (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 55.
[27] Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Volume VII*, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 1999), 153.

Freudian psychoanalysis. Although some of the specific features of these theories differ, they are nonetheless defined by three recurring features: First, fetishism is defined in contradistinction to a sexual instinct or drive that either leads naturally to or is culturally guided toward reproduction. Second, fetishism is seen as normal until it supersedes this reproductive aim of the instinct, at which point it becomes pathological or perverse. And third, all of these theories focus on an early childhood etiology for sexual fetishism, with a special emphasis on an initial impression that is linked with the emergence of the fetish.

Sexual fetishism is first articulated in the context of late nineteenth-century French psychology. As queer theorist Nikki Sullivan notes in her own brief treatment of sexual fetishism, the French psychologists Binet, Charcot, and Magnan characterize sexual fetishism as being symptomatic of "physical, psychic and moral degeneracy,"[28] a claim borne out of the late nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific notion that Western civilization was then in a state of moral and physical decline precipitated by hereditary defects. Robert Nye similarly situates the origins of sexual fetishism in French psychology as evidence of a national fin de siècle anxiety over the declining French birth rate, an anxiety that was also tinged with fears of degeneracy.[29] While this understanding of fetishism as a mark of degeneracy will fade over the course of the twentieth century, the three central tenets of theories of fetishism identified above do not; indeed, they seem compatible with but also capable of existing independently of the idea that fetishism is hereditary. And although Charcot and Magnan penned some of the earliest literature that touched on sexual fetishism, it is Alfred Binet's more influential 1887 essay "Le

[28] Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 172.
[29] Robert Nye, "The Medical Origins of Sexual Fetishism," in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, eds. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 13-30.

fétichisme dans l'amour"[30] that is most frequently held up as the modern origin of the concept of sexual fetishism.

In his essay, Binet firmly situates fetishism relative to the notion of a sexual instinct, which he argues is best understood by "compar[ing] it to an organic need, such as hunger."[31] In his view, the sexual instinct is like hunger in that it is "periodic," that it demands "satisfaction" and that it "becomes imperative" if ignored.[32] This understanding of the sexual instinct is a particularly enduring one; Freud's "Three Essays" open with "the assumption of a 'sexual instinct,' on the analogy of the instinct of nutrition, that is of hunger.'"[33] With this early theory of the instinct in mind, Binet defines fetishism as "the worship of things that are unsuitable to directly meet the purposes of reproduction."[34] However, Binet notably argues that romantic love is naturally fetishistic in quality and that fetishes are but extreme cases of a natural phenomenon.[35] He observes that so-called "normal love" seems to involve some degree of focus on objects that are reproductively irrelevant—eyes, hair, articles of clothing, etc.[36]—but he also argues that when these "insignificant" details achieve an "exaggerated" importance, fetishism is undeniably perverse.[37] Binet also continues to popularize the notion introduced by Charcot and Magnan's clinical work that each incidence of fetishism "hearkens back to a specific accident in the fetishists' particular psychic history"[38] in which the sexual instinct first becomes inordinately attached to an inappropriate object. It is Binet, then, who most

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[30] Alfred Binet, "Le Fétichisme dans L'amour," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 24 (1887): 143-167.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Freud, "Three Essays," 135.
[34] Binet, "Le Fétichisme."
[35] Sullivan, *Introduction*, 174.
[36] Binet, "Le Fétichisme."
[37] Ibid.
[38] Sullivan, *Introduction*, 174.

memorably establishes the three themes identified above: fetishism is defined in contrast to a reproductive instinct, its difference form "normal" sexuality is one of degree not kind, and the cause of sexual fetishism can be traced back to an early childhood moment.

These themes repeat themselves with only slight and mostly cosmetic variations throughout the classic sexological literature on sexual fetishism. In his ever-expanding tome *Psychopathia Sexualis*—the first edition of which was published in 1886—German sexologist Krafft-Ebing also articulates a theory of sexual fetishism through the lens of the drive or sexual instinct. Krafft-Ebing perceives the sexual instinct as the "primary motive in man"[39] and, more precisely, as the "desires [which] arise in the consciousness of the individual, which have for their purpose the perpetuation of the species"[40] For Krafft-Ebing, too, it is the fetishist's reproductive failures that signify deviance. Even though Krafft-Ebing, like Binet, regards fetishism as a facet of "normal" love—referring to it as the "germ of sexual love"[41]—he nonetheless argues that if "the fetishist does not find gratification in coitus itself" and must instead rely on the fetish, then the fetishist has a "pathological condition."[42] In other words, Krafft-Ebing writes, "the distinguishing mark of pathological fetishism [is] the necessity for the presence of the fetish as a *conditio sine qua non* for the possibility of the performance of coitus."[43] Krafft-Ebing also offers an endorsement of the idea that "in the life of every fetishist there may be assumed to have been some event which determined the association of lustful feeling

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[39] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study*, trans. F.J. Rebman (New York: Medical Art Agency, 1887), 2.
[40] Ibid., 25.
[41] Ibid., 18.
[42] Ibid., 54.
[43] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Pscyhopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study*, trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1894), 153.

with [a] single impression" that takes place in "early youth."[44] His copious case histories of sexual fetishism in *Psychopathia Sexualis* repeatedly zero in on these childhood incidents, as in this case of a man with a fetish for women who limp:

> Since his seventh year he had for a playmate a lame girl of the same age. At the age of twelve, being of a nervous disposition and hypersexually inclined, the boy began spontaneously to masturbate. At that period puberty set in, and it lies beyond doubt that the first sexual emotions towards the other sex were coincident with the sight of the lame girl. For ever after only halting women excited him sexually.[45]

Or in this case of foot fetishism:

> Had good mental qualities, was of nervous disposition, but never suffered from nervous disease, showed no signs of degeneration. Patient distinctly recalled that even at the age of six he became sexually excited when he saw the naked feet of women, and was impelled to follow them, or watch them when at work.[46]

Like Binet and Krafft-Ebing before him, the British sexologist Havelock Ellis reads sexual fetishism as a deviation of the sexual instinct. He positions fetishism as a subset of his own unique concept of "erotic symbolism," which he defines as the "tendency whereby the lover's attention is diverted from the central focus of sexual attraction,"[47] a central focus that he predictably identifies as "sexual conjugation."[48] For Ellis, some degree of erotic symbolism is par for the course, such as in "the individualizing tendency to concentrate amorous attention upon some single characteristic of the adult woman or man who is normally the object of sexual love."[49] But when conjugal sex is forgotten altogether, Ellis is more than willing to use pathologizing language: "… it is only in the final condition, in which the symbol

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[44] Ibid., 155.
[45] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*, 236-237.
[46] Ibid., 231.
[47] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume V* (Project Gutenberg, 2004). http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13614/13614-h/13614-h.htm (accessed January 15, 2015).
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

becomes all-sufficing, that we have a true and complete perversion. In the less complete forms of symbolism it is still the woman who is desired and the ends of procreation may be served."[50] Under this theory of erotic symbolism, Ellis defines fetishism as the "tendency whereby sexual attraction is unduly exerted by some special part or peculiarity of the body, or by some inanimate object which has become associated with it"[51] and he echoes an etiological focus on early childhood by claiming that "many erotic symbolisms take root in childhood and puberty, before the sexual instincts have reached full development."[52] He also states that the fetish "can usually … be traced to a definite starting point in the shock of some sexually emotional episode in early life."[53]

German sexologist and activist Magnus Hirschfeld is similarly guided by the concept of a drive or sexual instinct, which he sees as "the instinct which induces men … to achieve physical union of a particular kind (the sexual act: Latin, *coitus, cohabitation*) with a member of the opposite sex."[54] For Hirschfeld, sexual development is a unilinear process in which "any disturbance of the normal course … causes [one's] sexuality to differ from the normal."[55] Hirschfeld also regards fetishism as being normal to a certain extent, even noting that fetishism "has its roots in normal sexual life" but he nonetheless emphasizes that it "becomes a perversion when exaggerated to an independent practice"[56] and that it is a departure from that "normal course." Hirschfeld, too, places his theoretical emphasis on the etiology of fetishism with an only slightly revised version of Binet's theory of accidents; for Hirschfeld, fetishism is "based on a conscious or unconscious

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *Sexual Anomalies: The Origins, Nature, and Treatment of Sexual Disorders: A Summary of the Works of Magnus Hirschfeld, M.D.* (New York: Emerson Books, 1948), 50.
[55] Ibid., 29.
[56] Ibid., 445.

associative absorption of a sensual perception that is in accord with the individual psychosexual constitution."[57] In other words, Hirschfeld sees fetishism as more unfortunate than accidental: Some people are simply predisposed to be susceptible to absorb certain perceptions that can trigger sexual fetishes.

To this point, the theories of the sexual instinct and sexual fetishism that I have reviewed have been remarkably similar in their treatment of the sexual instinct. Sigmund Freud's work on fetishism—which, as I will show in Chapter Three, has become the paradigmatic resource on fetishism in feminist theory—seems, at first glance, to break away from his sexological colleagues and predecessors. But although Freud's theory of the sex drive or sexual instinct differs fundamentally from the generally reproductive instinct described above, his approach to fetishism ultimately satisfies the three central tenets of drive-foundational approaches to fetishism that I have continuously identified throughout this review.

First, while Freud crucially does not believe that the sexual instinct naturally leads to reproduction, his theory remains in such a tight—if torturous—conceptual orbit around that endpoint that his definition of fetishism cannot be extracted from it. Second, although Freud meaningfully troubles the boundary between the "normal" and the "perverse," he nonetheless participates in the perpetuation of this logic by arguing in favor of the pathologization of fetishism. And third, Freud does not eschew an etiological focus in his work on sexual fetishism but rather constructs a now-iconic psychoanalytic explanation for the origins of sexual fetishism that goes far beyond his predecessors in terms of its psychic specificity.

Freud does not assume that the sexual instinct has an automatic aim, nor that it is

[57] Ibid., 450.

inherently connected to any object; rather, Freud suggests that "the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object"[58] and is guided by cultural forces toward a reproductive aim. For terminological purposes, too, it is worth noting via Freud's translator James Strachey that the term that is translated as "instinct" in Freud's work is the German word "Trieb," which can alternately be translated as "drive,"[59] hence their interchangeable use here. Freud famously troubles the boundary between "normal" and "perverse" manifestations of the drive, arguing that no "healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim."[60] He also contends that, in this light, "perversion" should not be used as a term of reproach.[61] It is this quality of Freud's work that has made him such an influential thinker for queer theory, which as James Penney observes, has traditionally "placed [its emphasis] overwhelmingly on the critique of the way perversion … has been used to pathologize particular sexual practices."[62] Progressive, anti-moralistic readings of Freud are both eminently possible and frequently produced. And indeed, it would be tempting to take Freud's note that the fetish is "seldom felt by [the fetishist] as the symptom of an ailment accompanied by suffering"[63] as a foundation for an anti-moralistic theory of fetishism.

But as many have noted, Freud is painfully caught within a rubric of normality and perversion even as he attempts to trouble that rubric. Feminist theorist Ellen McCallum observes that Freud "vacillate[s]" between "progressive" and "conservative"

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[58] Freud, "Three Essays," 148.
[59] James Strachey, "Editor's Note to 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes'" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol XIV*, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 1999), 111.
[60] Freud, "Three Essays," 160-161.
[61] Ibid., 160-161.
[62] James Penney, *The World of Perversion: Psychoanalysis and the Impossible Absolute of Desire*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 173.
[63] Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Vol XXI*, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 1999), 152.

readings, between efforts to "deconstruct the separation between normal and perverse" and textual moves that "reinforce the conservative cultural assumptions which hold these binaries together."[64] Although Freud engages in a "radical interrogation" of normality, then, he simultaneously relies on "the context in which those categories are constructed."[65] Psychoanalytic scholar Dany Nobus likewise observes that Freud cannot articulate his theory of sexuality apart from a "socio-cultural standard of ethico-legal acceptability"[66]; he implicitly deploys "a set of social, moral, and legal values"[67] even while maintaining relatively progressive stances on, for example, homosexuality.[68] And maintaining Freud's commitment to his challenge of the "normal" requires a degree of vigilance that has not always been maintained by the school of thought which he inaugurated. As Nobus notes, Freudian psychoanalysts "have never really been satisfied with the idea that the 'pervert,' rather than 'becoming' one, has always been one and simply stayed that way."[69] Freud's idea that the sexual instinct is "polymorphously perverse,"[70] then, is indeed significant but putting that concept to good use requires ignoring Freud's own normative underpinnings. As Nobus observes, psychoanalysts have understandably struggled to "reconcile" the dual theoretical modes found in Freud's work: one that accepts sexual variation as a normal product of a polymorphously perverse sexual instinct, and one in which sexual variation must be explained through theories of

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[64] Ellen Lee McCallum, *Object Lessons: How to Do Things with Fetishism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 2-3.
[65] Ibid., 3.
[66] Dany Nobus, "Locating Perversion, Dislocating Psychoanalysis" in *Perversion: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, eds. Lisa Downing and Dany Nobus (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 8.
[67] Ibid., 9.
[68] See, e.g., Sigmund Freud, "Historical Notes: A Letter from Freud," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 107 (1951): 786-787.
[69] Nobus, "Locating Perversion," 9.
[70] Freud, "Three Essays," 191.

castration anxiety and Oedipalization.[71]

And rather than theorizing fetishism as a natural and expected outcome of a polymorphously perverse instinct that can take literal objects as its aim just as readily as human objects, Freud offers an elaborate and memorable explanation for the origins of fetishism. Freud theorizes the fetish as the endpoint in a complex sequence of lack, disavowal, and substitution. In Freudian theory, when a young boy—and, for Freud, it is always a boy, as I discuss further in Chapter Three—first discovers the apparent castration of his mother (lack), he experiences castration anxiety over the thought that he, too, could lose the phallus, and he then needs to deny his mother's castration (disavowal). In order to resolve this anxiety, the boy maintains a belief in the mother's penis by transposing it onto an object (substitution), perhaps even an object that was the "last impression"[72] he experienced before discovering her castration such as a shoe or a fur in his mother's closet. Most succinctly put: "the fetish is a substitute for the women's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and … does not want to give up."[73] Freud's explanation has more depth to it than the mere idea of a childhood "shock," "absorption," or "accident" put forward in early psychology and sexology but it nonetheless conforms to the same overall conceptual structure: the fetish is a deviation of the sexual instinct that threatens to become perverse if it replaces reproduction, and that can be traced to a specific childhood moment. As Freud summarizes, following Binet: "[T]he choice of a fetish is an after-effect of some sexual impression, received as a rule in early childhood."[74]

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[71] Ibid., 149.
[72] Ibid., 155.
[73] Ibid., 151-152.
[74] Ibid., 154.

And although Freud arguably grants perversion more degrees of freedom than any of his predecessors and colleagues, he nonetheless maintains that "certain [perversions] are so far removed from the normal in their content that we cannot avoid pronouncing them 'pathological'"[75] and that fetishism falls definitively in this category. Freud concurs with Binet specifically that "a certain degree of fetishism … is habitually present in normal love" but he, too, subscribes to the notion of a pathological point-of-no-return: "The situation only becomes pathological when the longing for the fetish passes beyond the point of being merely a necessary condition attached to the sexual object and actually takes the place of the normal aim."[76] This normal aim, Freud notes, is typically "regarded as being the union of the genitals in the act known as copulation"[77] and although his use of the passive tense here sets him apart from those who perceive the instinct as inherently reproductive, he nonetheless constructs his theory of fetishism against this aim. However complex Freud's relationship to the idea of normality may be, then, Binet's original theory of fetishism is still structurally intact in his work. Freud asks the exact same questions of sexual fetishism: What is the relationship of the fetish to the sexual instinct? When is fetishism normal and when is it perverse? And, the etiological question: When does the fetish emerge and how?

Dismantling the Drive

The fact that the psychological, sexological, and psychoanalytic literature I reviewed in the previous section returns time and again to these three recurring themes—fetishism is defined as a deviation of a drive or sexual instinct, fetishism is pathological past a certain

[75] Ibid., 161.
[76] Ibid., 154.
[77] Ibid., 149.

point, and fetishism is traceable to early childhood—is not a mere coincidence, nor is it entirely attributable to a shared intellectual trajectory. Indeed, t is not simply the case that the drive-foundational nature of these theories guides them into asking certain questions of fetishism but rather that fetishism is a necessary object for the construction of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct in the first place. If Charcot, Magnan, Binet, Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Hirschfeld, and Freud all seem to return to these three definitional features of fetishism with remarkable consistency, I want to argue in this section—via Michel Foucault's analysis of the sexual instinct across his oeuvre—that it is because analyzing fetishism in this way is, in large part, responsible for the origination, proliferation, and maintenance of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct beginning in the nineteenth century. What is fetishism's relationship to reproduction? When does it become perverse? Where does it come from? As a Foucauldian analysis can reveal, these are not earnest lines of inquiry so much as they are necessary tools for outlining the shape of a drive or sexual instinct that is essential to the deployment of sexuality.

For Michel Foucault, sexual fetishism plays a crucial role in the development of the notion of a drive or sexual instinct and in the deployment of sexuality as a whole. But in order to properly arrive at this claim, I first want to trace the way in which Foucault himself arrives at it over the course of his career. Foucault's critique of the notion of a drive or sexual instinct is one of the longest-running projects of his scholarly life. He delivers his most explicit challenge to the notion of a sexual instinct in his lectures at the Collège de France collected in *Abnormal*[78] before crystallizing his thoughts on the subject

[78] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, eds. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Verso, 2003).

in *History of Sexuality: Volume One*[79] but traces of this critique can be found as early as *History of Madness*[80] where he writes:

> In the light of its own naivety, psychoanalysis understood that all forms of madness have roots in troubled sexuality; but to say that is to do little more than note that our culture … placed sexuality on the dividing line of unreason. Since time immemorial … sexuality has been governed by systems of constraint; but it is a comparatively recent particularity of our own culture to have divided it so rigorously into Reason and Unreason. As a consequence and degradation of that, it was not long before it was also classified into healthy or sick, normal or abnormal.[81]

As the above passage makes clear, the Foucault of *Madness* has noticed that rationality has become a rubric through which we perceive sexuality, an insight that should recall the modern definition of a fetish as "something irrationally reverenced." He further notices that the division of sexuality into reasonable and unreasonable forms is of recent historical vintage and that through some as yet unrealized mechanism, this division of sexuality has allowed for the categorization, hierarchization and pathologization of human behavior, particularly sexual behavior, within both medical and juridical systems. But when did this take place and by what means?

A decade later when Foucault delivers the lectures collected in *Abnormal*, he answers these questions decisively. In *Abnormal*, Foucault describes a shift, taking place from the mid nineteenth into the early twentieth century, whereby the logic of madness is replaced by the installation of the instinct within modern psychiatry. He writes:

> As long as madness was conceived in terms of error, illusion, delirium, false belief, and nonobdedience to the truth—as it still was at the beginning of the nineteenth century—then there was no place within psychiatric discourse for

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[79] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978).
[80] Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2006).
[81] Ibid., 8.

> instinct as a brute, dynamic element. It could indeed be named, but it was neither constructed nor conceptualized.[82]

As late as 1826, by Foucault's report, the logic of delirium was "still the constitutive hallmark, or at least the major qualification, of madness"[83] and it explained madness in vocabulary pertaining to consciousness: error, illusion, belief, truth. But this logic of delirium is soon replaced with the concept of automatic, self-propelling biological principles that unconsciously motivate all of human behavior.

Foucault identifies a specific time period between 1840 and 1850, centering on Heinrich Kaan's own volume *Psychopathia Sexualis*—which shares a title with Krafft-Ebing's later work—during which the emerging discipline of modern psychology undertook the "epistemologico-political task" of promulgating a "twin theory of instinct and sexuality."[84] For Foucault, this linking of sexuality to the concept of the sexual instinct found in Kaan—and continuing through Charcot, Magnan, and Binet to the more widely-known sexological works—marks the founding moment of the psychiatrization of sex, the date of birth of a new "psychiatry, of an analysis of sexuality that pinpoints a sexual instinct present in all behavior."[85] And the instinct, for Foucault, is precisely the conceptual technology that enables this new hybridized medical and juridical power to assert itself so forcefully: "The point of origin of this transformation, its historical condition of possibility, was the emergence of the instincts. The mainspring, the gear mechanism, of this transformation was the problematic, the technology of the instincts."[86] The sexual instinct is, otherwise put, "the major vector of the problem of abnormality."[87]

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[82] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 130.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 277-278.
[85] Ibid., 282.
[86] Ibid., 134.
[87] Ibid., 132.

Foucault argues that it is this theory of the instinct which gives medicine access through the judicial system to a "general jurisdiction, both within and outside the asylum, not over madness, but over the abnormal and all abnormal conduct."[88] Indeed, this expanded purview of power is precisely what was gained in the shift from delirium to instinct. As he details in a passage that reads like the above passage from *History of Madness* with the missing portions filled in:

> Basing itself on the instincts, nineteenth-century psychiatry is able to bring into the ambit of illness and mental illness all the disorders and irregularities… that are not … due to madness. … On the basis of the instincts and around what was previously the problem of madness, it becomes possible to organize the whole problematic of the abnormal at the level of the most elementary and everyday conduct. This transition to the miniscule … is finally converted into the form of all the little perverse monsters who have been constantly proliferating since the end of the nineteenth century.[89]

In other words, Foucault does not perceive the nineteenth-century project of psychology and sexology as the breathtaking discovery and classification of a pre-existing field of human sexual variation; rather, he argues that the deployment of the instinct is, in fact, what defines perverse behavior as such and, further, what allows the logic of perversion to be proliferated and generalized across all human behavior, not just sexual behavior.

Foucault categorically refuses to accept the sexual instinct as a psychological truth, opting instead to examine "the conditions of possibility for the appearance, construction, and regulated use of [the] concept within a discursive formation."[90] As he will go on to argue in *Volume One*, sexuality is not a self-evident force but instead a "historical construct"[91] that enables the classification of behavior and the biopolitical regulation of populations. Indeed, for Foucault, the development of the instinct marks a

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[88] Ibid., 134.
[89] Ibid., 132.
[90] Ibid., 131-132.
[91] Foucault, *Sexuality,* 105.

shift from the "sovereign power … to decide life and death"[92] to biopower, which is "situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population."[93] Put differently, sexuality is not a "stubborn drive" but rather "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power."[94] Or, in more explicitly *bio*political terms: "… sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death."[95]

But not only is the Foucault of *Abnormal* politically wary of the power relations enabled by the concept of the sexual instinct—a problem that he thoroughly explores throughout his subsequent work—he also finds the instinct to be an overly simplistic concept relative to the phenomena to which it has been applied, a finding that resonates with Silvan Tomkins' own approach to the idea of a drive or sexual instinct. In analyzing the case of Henriette Cornier, for example, Foucault notes that instinct simply "passes through conduct like a meteor"[96] with no regard for the individual's interest or pleasure. And on several occasions in the lectures, Foucault takes issue with psychology's recourse to "automatism,"[97] a tautological mode of explanation for human behavior in which people are said to do things simply because they are impelled to do them. This account of human behavior, he observes, leaves the complex interplay of "representations, passions, and affects" in a "secondary, derivative, or subordinate" status relative to the unilateral action of "impulses, drives, [and] tendencies."[98]

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[92] Ibid., 135.
[93] Ibid., 137.
[94] Ibid., 103.
[95] Ibid., 147.
[96] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 297.
[97] Ibid., 282.
[98] Ibid., 131.

It is Foucault, then, and not Tomkins, who first identifies the core problem that I take up in this dissertation: drive-foundational theories of sexuality and behavior reduce affects to a secondary status. As Lauren Guilmette observes in a recent article in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, "the affective turn in feminist and queer theory [has] overlooked Foucault,"[99] in part due to "historical circumstance"[100] but also because his name has been rendered synonymous with *Volume One* in these fields. While Guilmette gestures toward the powerfully ways in which a Foucauldian approach to affect could be braided together with a Tomkinsian approach, this dissertation will focus primarily on Tomkins while still echoing Guilmette's focus on the affective potential of a Foucauldian genealogical method. In particular, Guilmette zeroes in on the opening of Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in which he writes:

> From these elements, however, genealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles.[101]

As Guilmette notes, the genealogical method Foucault follows throughout his oeuvre is one of unearthing "patterns of feeling"[102] from the archive. A genealogical method traces "sentiments" not to categorize them, but to engage meaningfully with the "scenes" that have been obscured by more traditional historical methodologies. Chapter Two of this dissertation is, in part, an attempt to use Tomkins as a tool in a Foucauldian genealogy of affect in a wide range of fetish literature.

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[99] Lauren Guilmette, "In What We Tend to Feel Is Without History: Foucault, Affect, and the Ethics of Curiosity," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 28 (2014): 286.
[100] Ibid., 287.
[101] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 76.
[102] Guilmette, "In What We Tend to Feel," 285.

At present, however, I want to observe that the affective qualities of sexual fetishism are not just *one of the* casualties of the general subordination of affects to drives in drive-foundational theories of sexuality. In *History of Sexuality: Volume One*, Foucault realizes that the figure of the fetishist is, in fact, *chief* among "all the little perverse monsters who have been constantly proliferating since the end of the nineteenth century."[103] In this later work, Foucault argues that sexual fetishism plays a prominent role in the production of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct, as well as in the proliferation of perversions enabled by psychology and psychoanalysis, which gives rise to the categorization, multiplication, and taxonomization of sexual variation across the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

First, however, I should note that *Volume One* is Foucault's critique of the instinct in its most crystallized form. In three parallel passages in this text, Foucault notes that psychology first "isolates"[104] the sexual instinct as a concept and implants it deep within the body as a "biological,"[105] "psychical,"[106] and "anatomo-physiological"[107] entity. With the instinct firmly implanted, abnormal behavior can then be attributed to problems with the instinct, with its "anomalies,"[108] "deviations," "infirmities,"[109] and its "peculiar development."[110] It is not the case, then, that the notion of a sexual instinct or drive is developed in order to account for pre-existing and self-evidently pathological behavior; but rather that the instinct itself gave birth to the modern concept of "perversions," or, in

[103] Ibid., 132.
[104] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 105, 117.
[105] Ibid., 105.
[106] Ibid., 117.
[107] Ibid., 154.
[108] Ibid., 105.
[109] Ibid., 115.
[110] Ibid., 153.

other words, that it made it "possible for perverse behavior patterns to arise."[111] Foucault makes it clear here that the sexual instinct is conceived as a singular force—a vector even—emanating from the body which becomes perverse by way of deviation. In fact, this implicit shape of the sexual instinct is still preserved in the now-archaic verb "to perverse" which means "to turn away from that which is good, right, or true."[112]

And if, as Foucault claims, the purpose of the instinct is to create and perpetuate a generalizable and gradated logic of perversion that encompasses all human behavior, then sexual fetishism "from at least as early as 1877" functions not just as a perversion but as "the model perversion" or "the guiding thread for analyzing all the other deviations."[113] In *Volume One*, Foucault argues that fetishism is not just one of the perverse behavior patterns that can be regulated through the development of the drive or sexual instinct but rather one of the most influential templates for the drive or sexual instinct itself. As noted above, he observes that the instinct "through its peculiar development and according to the objects to which it could become attached, made it possible for perverse behavior patterns to arise and made their genesis intelligible"[114] and I want to mark here that the sexual instinct requires a focus on an etiological moment—a "genesis"—in order to narrate the emergence of perversion as a developmental deviation.

It is precisely this precondition for the notion of a drive or sexual instinct that fetishism satisfies: "In [fetishism] one could clearly perceive the way in which the instinct became fastened to an object in accordance with an individual's historical

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[111] Ibid., 153.
[112] "perverse, v.". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/141673 (accessed January 20, 2015).
[113] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 154.
[114] Ibid., 153.

adherence and biological inadequacy."[115] A concept defined as a teleological impulse that can branch away from an original aim must be defined against a seemingly extreme sexual object that falls far afield of the behaviors that the instinct enshrines as normal. Homosexuality or "inversion" as it is often called in sexological and psychoanalytic literature can certainly be *analyzed* through drive-foundational theories of sexuality but the behaviors encompassed by them are perhaps too homologous with or evocative of "normal" genital intercourse to function as the model perversion (see Chapter Three). On the other hand, fetishism—with its signature image of a man completely entranced by a shoe or a fur—presents a stark sexuality that has somehow wandered far afield of interpersonal interaction and genitality, let alone reproduction.

Furthermore, the fact that the "historical adherence,"[116] or the etiology, of fetishism seems so easily fixable because of the singularity and specificity as its object—as shown, for example, by the above excerpts from Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* in which a patient must merely recall a childhood incident with a shoe in order to prove causality—provides psychology, sexology, and psychoanalysis with a clear historical moment in which the instinct seems to stray from some intended path. Fetishism, then, acts as the model perversion, in part, because it has been carefully designed to contain a historical narrative about the moment when the instinct first attached to the fetish object. Without these original, clearly identifiable moments of deviation, the instinct loses its unique shape as a teleological vector that naturally exceeds its supposed aims and branches out into various perverse directions. In this sense, the inordinate focus on the etiology of fetishism found in drive-foundational theories is not so much a product of the

[115] Ibid., 154.
[116] Ibid., 154.

use of the drive as an analytic as it is a necessary tactic to produce and maintain that analytic in the first place. Without being able to identify any "peculiar development"[117] in the sexual instinct, the drive itself—along with the entire category of perversion—would become unintelligible and, therefore, an unsuitable tool for biopolitical purposes.

In this light, too, the psychological, sexological, and psychoanalytic insistence that fetishism is "perverse" despite repeated acknowledgments that it can be "normal" also reveal just how central fetishism is to the production of the drive or sexual instinct. In *Abnormal*, Foucault argues that the sexual instinct as a concept is designed to be naturally perverse: "The sexual instinct overflows its natural end and it does so naturally. In other words, the instinct is normally excessive and partially marginal with regard to copulation."[118] The sexologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts—from Krafft-Ebing to Freud—all argue that fetishism is both normal and perverse, both a natural part of heterosexuality and, beyond a certain point, its most radical foil. In so doing, they reveal the privileged place of fetishism in the deployment of sexuality and in the generalization of a gradated logic of perversion that can be applied beyond the confines of the asylum. Fetishism encapsulates the constitutive hypocrisy of modern sexuality in that it is both essential to romantic love and pathological *past a certain point*. Foucault argues in *Abnormal* that psychiatry "dispenses with the pathological"[119] in order to gain power "over the nonpathological."[120] The gradated quality of the concept of fetishism—the fact that it contains within it a sliding scale from normal to perverse—provides evidence of this strategic shift. If the distinction between "normal" sexuality and fetishistic sexuality

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[117] Ibid., 153.
[118] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 278.
[119] Ibid., 308.
[120] Ibid., 309.

were rigid and binary, medical and juridical spheres would not be able to diffuse their power across all behavior. But as a concept that is both generalized and gradated, fetishism can help the drive to "[bring] under its control a domain of objects that are defined as not being pathological processes."[121]

But fetishism plays an important role not just in the generation of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct but in the modern deployment of sexuality itself. The concept of sexuality that Foucault traces in *Volume One* hinges on the development of the drive or sexual instinct which, in turn, relies on fetishism as a model perversion. As Foucault argues in *Volume One*, a theory of deviations with "fetishism" as one of its "four major forms" gives rise to the "notion of 'sex'" as a "fictitious unity" that acts as a "causal principle" in human behavior.[122] At stake in this deployment of the sexual instinct and the proliferation of perversions it enables is "the very production of sexuality"[123] itself. And it is this "idea of sex *in itself*" that Foucault argues "we cannot accept without examination,"[124] a claim that I will inflect with Tomkins in Chapter Three.

Fetishism, then, plays a primary part in the deployment of sexuality that Foucault details in *Volume One*, a deployment that encompasses and is demonstrated by literature reviewed in the previous section of this Introduction. To begin drafting an affective theory of sexuality with sexual fetishism at the forefront is not to start at the margins of human sexuality and work inward but rather to consciously challenge drive-foundational theories at one of their key points of origin and work outward. If fetishism—the "model perversion" and the veritable poster child for the concept of a drive or sexual instinct—

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[121] Ibid.
[122] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 154.
[123] Ibid., 105.
[124] Ibid., 152.

can successfully be articulated in affective terms instead, then the broader project of this dissertation—which is to call into question the relative significance of affects and drives in the domain of human sexuality—will have been a success.

Why Fetishism?

In a 1982 interview, Foucault offers a glimpse into some of the conceptual territory that he feels has been foreclosed by drive and repression-based theories of sexuality:

> Sexual behavior is not, as is too often assumed, a superimposition of, on the one hand, desires that derive from natural instincts, and, on the other hand, of permissive or restrictive laws that tell us what we should or shouldn't do. Sexual behavior is more than that. It is also the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it.[125]

I would argue that the affective value of fetishism is precisely one line of inquiry that has been overshadowed by drive-foundational theories which remain conceptually bound to questions that shore up the conceptual primacy of the drive or sexual instinct such as "Where did it come from?" over seemingly less critical questions like "How does it feel?" Indeed, any theory of sexuality rooted in the concept of a drive or sexual instinct will find it difficult to avoid the first question and ill-equipped to articulate an answer to the latter. But an affective theory of sexuality that pointedly refuses to lean on or build out of the drive-foundational theories that have traditionally been used in the critical humanities may be able to circumvent an etiological focus while better articulating some of the underexplored affective facets of human sexuality.

The overall structure of this Introduction has entailed building a house of cards out of psychology, sexology, and Freud only to knock it down with Foucault. In the first section, I reviewed the historical literature on sexual fetishism in the disciplines of

[125] Michel Foucault, "Sexual Choice, Sexual Act," in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), 141-142.

psychology, sexology, and psychoanalysis, all of which position fetishism as perverse in contrast to a teleological, reproductive drive or sexual instinct. I demonstrated that this focus on the drive seems to be necessarily accompanied by a fixation on the etiology of fetishism. But in the second section, I argued using Foucault that it is not the case that theories of the drive are *applied* to sexual fetishism thereby producing these definitional themes—the production of perversions, a focus on etiology—but rather that sexual fetishism helps to facilitate the nineteenth-century production of the very notion of the drive in the first instance. The three definitional features of fetishism, then, are not consequences of using a concept the drive or sexual instinct so much as they are necessary preconditions for the development of that very concept. As the model perversion, sexual fetishism plays an important role in the deployment of the theory of the sexual instinct and furthermore, of "the idea of sex *in itself*"[126] and this role depends on fetishism being wedded to the drive or sexual instinct. The theories of fetishism presented by Binet, Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Hirschfeld, and Freud, then, do not arrive at their distinctive shape because of the drive but rather *for* and *in service to* the drive which, in turn, enables the medical and juridical spheres to consolidate their power and construct a "political ordering of life"[127] itself.

In a sense, then, the two sections of this Introduction cancel each other out. The two approaches to sexuality outlined here—one culminating in Freud, the other distinctly Foucauldian—may be "fundamentally incompatible" as Lynne Huffer suggests and yet, in contemporary scholarship, "they both hold a foundational place for queer theory."[128]

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[126] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 152.
[127] Ibid., 123.
[128] Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 36.

With the tension between the two sections of this Introduction in mind, I would suggest that the source of this fundamental incompatibility is that one tradition centers its view of sexuality on the notion of "impulses, drives, [and] tendencies"[129] and the other fundamentally rejects the saliency and primacy accorded to these concepts. Huffer further argues that the longstanding and "strangely American" attempts to integrate these two schools of thought has "produced the odd, distorted, infamously ungraspable conception of sexuality that has become the common fare of queer theory."[130] Gayle Rubin's work in "Thinking Sex," for example, presents a largely inchoate theory of sexuality as a product of her attempts to synthesize a Freudian understanding of sexuality with the Foucauldian critique of sexuality.[131] Following Foucault, Huffer suggests that a theory of sexuality built on the drive-foundational theories of psychoanalysis would be unsound but she also notes that building a theory of sexuality exclusively from the Foucault of *Volume One* would result in an account that is "[s]apped of what we might call the messy thickness of erotic life."[132] The Foucault of *Volume One* offers a critique of sexuality as it has been constructed through psychology and psychoanalysis but he leaves the door open for constructive projects that explore, for instance, "the value one attaches"[133] to sexuality or the realm of "representations, passions, and affects"[134] that accompany it. Apart from the primacy accorded to the drive, sexuality could adopt a range of different conceptual meanings and, for her part, Huffer finds some of these meanings in a theory of *eros* located in Foucault's earlier work, specifically in *History of Madness*.

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[129] Foucault, *Abnormal,* 131.
[130] Huffer, *Mad*, 36.
[131] Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3-44.
[132] Huffer, *Mad*, 36.
[133] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 141-142.
[134] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 131.

In this dissertation, I put forward the argument that Tomkins' *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* is also a viable and underutilized starting point for a theory of sexuality that avoids the strangeness of attempts to synthesize Freud and Foucault, one that can sidestep the impasse of drive-foundational and Foucauldian approaches to sexuality. In the first section of this Introduction, I argued that psychological, sexological and psychoanalytic literature on fetishism adopt a repetitive conceptual approach to sexual fetishism as a function of their mutual reliance on the notion of a drive or sexual instinct. In the second section, however, I demonstrated using Foucault that these recurring themes are *not* properly a function of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct itself but rather the template for the model perversion in the deployment of sexuality. But the space for constructive project still remains. In an attempt to construct a new affective theory of sexuality apart from the stymied "Freudo-Foucaldianism"[135] that Huffer finds in queer theories of sexuality, I put aside the broad range of literature surveyed in this Introduction and work primarily and almost exclusively with Tomkins in the next chapter. Not only can Tomkins provide a robust affective vocabulary for analyzing sexuality, he also renders the drive subordinate to affects, thereby providing a theory that can sidestep the classic definitional tenets of fetishism in drive-foundational theories and begin to think and —perhaps more importantly—to *feel* fetishism differently.

[135] Ibid., 137.

Chapter One
Toward an Affective Theory of Sexuality

What are affects?

Excitement is the primary affect of human sexuality. Or, at least, mid twentieth-century psychologist Silvan Tomkins makes this seemingly self-evident but nonetheless remarkable claim in his multi-volume work *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*. This chapter is an attempt to unpack the full implications of this claim and to address the definitional questions that underlie it. In the Introduction, I argued that sexual fetishism has been crucial to the development of the very drive-foundational theories that have overshadowed and, indeed, obscured the primacy of affect in human sexuality; in this chapter, I work in the reverse direction, beginning by expanding on Tomkins' claim that excitement forms the foundation of human sexuality while moving toward a renewed consideration of sexual fetishism through an affective lens. Where the Introduction adopted a critical approach by analyzing the ways in which psychological, sexological, and psychoanalytic theories of sexual fetishism focus on fetishism's normality and its etiology, I adopt a more positive approach in this chapter by constructing a theory of sexuality solely rooted in Tomkins, a theory that can ask different and more descriptive questions about forms of sexual variation such as sexual fetishism.

What are affects? While I will explore various defining characteristics of affects in this chapter, a brief gloss on Silvan Tomkins' particular understanding of affect is necessary in order to construct this theory. Tomkins defines affects as "sets of muscle and glandular responses located in the face and also widely distributed through the body, which generate sensory feedback which is either inherently 'acceptable' or

'unacceptable."[1] For Tomkins, an affect is a biological response that is either inherently positive or negative: a smile is innately rewarding, a wince is innately punishing. He defines nine and only nine primary affects: surprise-startle, distress-anguish, anger-rage, enjoyment-joy, interest-excitement, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, disgust, and dissmell, which is Tomkins' neologism for a reaction to a bad smell. Each of these affects is a unique biological response with its own set of activators. Tomkins categorizes enjoyment and excitement as positive affects and the remainder of the primary affects as negative with the exception of surprise which is neutral.[2]

These affects, for Tomkins, are not vestigial responses to environmental stimuli that are no longer necessary for human survival; rather, Tomkins notes that, together, these affects constitute the "primary motivational system" that undergirds all of human behavior.[3] In his theory, humans are innately motivated to "maximize positive affects" and "minimize and reduce negative affects," not just to be happy but also in order to survive.[4] Affective responses, then, are not simply emotions—although they are often colloquially described as such—but rather vital mechanisms that bring important information to the "conscious attention of the individual."[5] Dissmell warns one not to eat rotten feed. Fear tells one to run. And a positive affect like interest motivates someone to continue inherently rewarding behavior.

While humans consciously experience these affects as bodily, biological responses, they are activated in the first instance "by a variety of innate activators, such

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[1] Tomkins, *Affect*, 135.
[2] Ibid., 273.
[3] Ibid., 4.
[4] Ibid., 177.
[5] Ibid., 151.

as drive signals and other affects as well as external activators."[6] Startle, for instance, can be activated by a sharp sudden external stimulus like a gunshot[7] while distress can be activated by a prolonged "quantity" or "density" of negative stimulation such as a gnawing pain. Drive signals, which I will consider in more detail in subsequent sub-sections, can also activate affects: the "low-level pain of…hunger"[8] can easily give way to distress. In addition to external activators and drive signals, affects can also activate other affects. Someone might be surprised by her own interest in a morbid scene, for example, before feeling shamed by the enjoyment she feels if she indulges that curiosity.

Affects, in short, are motivating biological responses that are activated by both internal and external stimuli. With this basic definition of affect in mind, I will continue with the project of assembling an affective theory of sexuality from Tomkins' relatively sparse commentary on sexuality in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*. In order to construct this theory, this chapter moves programmatically through a series of questions: First, why would I want to construct an affective theory of sexuality? What conceptual benefits would such a theory offer? Second, how would an affective theory of sexuality situate itself with regards to the concept of the drive which has been central to the study of sexuality and sexual variation? Third, what role does affect play in human sexuality? What are the respective roles of affects and drives in human sexuality? And fourth, which affects are central to human sexuality and what are their shapes? In conclusion, I will offer some preliminary notes toward an affective theory of sexuality while also gesturing toward the utility of such a theory for the study of sexual fetishism.

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[6] Ibid., 139.
[7] Ibid., 140.
[8] Ibid., 141.

Why affect?

Why affect? Why would one need or want an affective theory of sexuality? As I discussed in the Introduction, psychological, sexological, and psychoanalytic literatures are unable to account for some forms of sexual deviance, particularly sexual fetishism, without constructing implicit or explicit oppositions between the normal and the abnormal or perverse. Questions of etiology have also tended to dominate these accounts. Freud, for example, finds fetishism to be "quite specially remarkable" because the sexual instinct has been attached not to a person but to a thing "entirely unsuited to serve the natural aim" and, as such, he feels the need to account for the etiology of fetishism relative to the etiology of "normal" sexuality.[9] In the Introduction, I observed that this dual focus on fetishism's abnormality and etiology serves to shore up the very concept of the drive or sexual instinct. An affective theory of sexuality, on the other hand, might be able to look at sexual fetishism in a different light and ask questions that are less prescriptive and more descriptive. In other words, instead of demanding "Where did this abnormal deviation come from?" an affective theory of sexuality might ask: "How is this fetish felt?"

But in this particular chapter, I need not necessarily dispute the veracity, political expediency or explanatory power of psychological, sexological and psychoanalytic literature on sexual variation—as I did in the Introduction—when I can simply begin with the observation that an affective theory of sexual variation might be more parsimonious than its predecessors. The affect system is well-matched in terms of dynamism, transformability, complexity, and generality to encompass and explore the wide range of human sexual behavior. Drive-foundational theories, as noted in the Introduction, indulge

[9] Freud, "Three Essays," 105.

in what Foucault calls "automatism"[10] —a method of explanation that accounts for sexual variation through recourse to the realm of the instinctive, impulsive, and unconscious. A Tomkinsian theory of sexuality, on the other hand, would have access to a recombinable affect system characterized by a degree of freedom and generality that allows for sexuality's conscious motivations to be examined and articulated without recourse to tautological principles like the drive or sexual instinct. An affective theory of sexuality, then, need not get mired down in the drive-centered questions of abnormality, pathology, and perversion that have characterized queer theory for so long when it can simply analyze sexual behavior through a different lens, apart from those questions.

The two primary features of the affect system that make it an appealing foundation for a theory of sexuality are its freedom and transformability. For Tomkins, any affect can take any object: "There is literally no kind of object which has not historically been linked to one or another of the affects."[11] This freedom of the affect system is essential for the study of sexual variation, especially sexual fetishism, because virtually any object, practice, or idea can be fetishized. The affect of excitement, which Tomkins sees as primary in human sexuality, can affix itself to any kind of object. Without making an explicit connection to sexual fetishism, Tomkins himself follows through on this idea: "In point of fact the excitement affect can be emitted to food, to automobiles, to an idea, in short to anything which is exciting to the person who is experiencing it."[12] Elsewhere, Tomkins notes that "[o]ne can be excited about anything

[10] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 282.
[11] Tomkins, *Affect*, 74.
[12] Ibid., 31.

under the sun."[13] First and foremost, then, an affective theory of sexuality asks descriptive, idiosyncratic questions about sexual objects rather than etiological questions: "What is exciting about a car for this particular person?" and not "How did the drive or sexual instinct come to be attached to the car?" While Tomkins' later work in what he terms script theory could certainly be put to use to ask more developmental and etiological questions (e.g. "How did scenes of excitement with cars come to be coassembled and magnified into a recurrent excitement with cars?),[14] his basic theory of affects and their activators is unconcerned with the origins of sexual behavior—perhaps refreshingly so, given the predictability with which drive-foundational theories return to the etiology of sexual fetishism in order to shore up their constitutive foundations.

Tomkins' additional stipulation that any affect can take any other affect as its object grants his theory the flexibility to account for an even wider range of sexual behavior. Tomkins notes that affects "may also be invested in other affects, combine with other affects, intensify or modulate them, and suppress or reduce them."[15] What this means concretely is that excitement—sexual excitement included—can affix itself to affects which, at first, might seem to be inherently negative. The idea of positive affect about negative affect might appear to contradict Tomkins' central principles of human motivation. Tomkins argues that human behavior is patterned by four central "blueprints" called General Images which are, essentially, affective mission statements. The first two General Images are: "1) positive affect should be maximized; 2) negative affect should be

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[13] Silvan S. Tomkins, "Simulation of Personality: The Interrelationships between Affect, Memory, Thinking, Perception and Action" in *Computer Simulation of Personality: Frontier of Psychological Theory*, eds. Silvan S. Tomkins and Samuel Messick, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1963), 16.
[14] See, e.g., Tomkins, *Affect*, 663-684.
[15] Ibid., 76.

minimized."[16] Put simply: people generally try to feel good things and try to avoid feeling bad things. By this logic, humans should be disincentivized to incorporate negative affect into sexual experience. In a drive-foundational theory, unexpected affective variation in sexual behavior is often explained by qualifying the drive itself, suggesting, for instance, that it has an "aggressive component"[17] as Freud does in the case of sadism. Tomkins, on the other hand, could theorize a sexuality that involves negative affect by explaining that the affect of excitement can attach itself to any affect. Rather than contradicting Tomkins' General Images, then, someone who seeks sexual excitement in an unconventional way may be maximizing positive affect precisely through the act of feeling a negative affect.

This ability of excitement to take negative affect as its object is necessary for understanding sexual fetishism, given the fact that many fetishes trade in objects, ideas, and bodily processes that are commonly perceived to be or are innately negative. The experience of vomiting, for example, would typically activate the affects of disgust and dissmell. But given the existence of a phenomenon like erotic vomiting—first cataloged in the psychoanalytic literature in a 1982 article by Robert Stoller[18] which I will read in Chapter Two—an affective theory of sexuality would require a way to affix excitement itself to the affect of disgust. Tomkins' theory provides precisely this accommodation. In an affective theory of sexuality, it need not be the case that the erotic vomiter counter-intuitively finds vomiting to be exciting, but rather that she finds the *unpleasantness* of vomiting to be exciting in and of itself. In other words, affects and objects can always

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[16] Ibid., 180.
[17] Freud, "Three Essays," 158.
[18] Robert J. Stoller, "Erotic Vomiting," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 11 (1982): 361-365.

combine in complex ways but positive affect, in Tomkins' theory, is always sexuality's bottom line.

At first blush, Tomkins' theory might appear to be so unbounded as to be functionally meaningless—anything goes, it seems, when any affect can take any object including any other affect—and, indeed, I have initially highlighted its freedom here. But Tomkins' affect system is, in fact, a system of freedoms and constraints, defined by finite values with multiple recombinatory possibilities. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank explain, Tomkins' theory occupies a crucial conceptual territory "between two and infinity." In other words, Tomkins' theory works with a finite set of terms—nine and only nine primary affects—that can be recombined in "finitely many" ways. Tomkins' affects are *digital* in the sense that they are a series of "discrete values"[19]: there are a finite number of affects with discrete differentiating properties. But they are also *analogue* in the sense that there are "infinite gradations" of each affect.[20]

Like Sedgwick and Frank, I find "great conceptual value" in Tomkins' habit of "layering digital (on/off) with analog (graduated and/or multiply differentiated) representational models."[21] Tomkins resolutely paints his theory with a limited palette without throwing out the canvas in frustration. Tomkins finds freedom *through* constraint by designing an immensely generative system that is nonetheless defined by certain parameters. The wide range of human sexual behavior requires a rigorous examination of the discrete but infinitely gradated combinations of affects, objects, ideas, bodies, and practices that characterize it; by remaining in the space between two and infinity,

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[19] "digital, n. and adj.". OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/52611 (accessed November 15, 2014).
[20] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," in *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, eds. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 15.
[21] Ibid., 8.

Tomkins' theory is well-suited to this task. And while Tomkins' theory might seem a little laissez-faire at first, as I proceed, I will show that it is indeed defined by certain parameters, the first two of which I have already specified: Sexuality *must* be affixed to an object, even if that object is an affect. And sexuality *must* be characterized by positive affect, even if that positive affect is affixed to negative affect.

What is the relationship between affects and drives?

While it might be tempting to abandon the drive altogether in favor of the seemingly endless freedom and flexibility of the affect system—especially given the Foucauldian critique of the drive I offered in the Introduction—the drive does retain a place in Tomkins' theory of human motivation and it plays an important role, at least as a placeholder, in maintaining its generative degree of boundedness. As such, a nascent affective theory of sexuality must grapple with the question of the drive or sexual instinct, even if only to diminish its importance. Although Tomkins sees drives as working in tandem with affects, his subordination of drives to affects could allow an affective theory of sexuality to avoid the conceptual and political pitfalls of the drive-foundational theories of sexual fetishism reviewed in the Introduction. The major conceptual move of a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality would be a move away from these drive-foundational theories but it is nevertheless important to understand the way in which Tomkins conceptualizes the relationship between affects and drives in order to properly contextualize his claim that excitement is the primary affect of human sexuality.

One of the central theses of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* is an inversion of the relationship between affects and the drives. Whereas sexological and psychoanalytic literature on sexual variation position the drives as primary and the affects as ancillary—

as Tomkins puts it, affects have been regarded as "something vestigial which might have been useful somewhere in man's distant past"[22]—Tomkins posits that affects are vital for human motivation. Accordingly, an affective theory of sexuality would ask us to think of sexuality not as a motor that gives off affects in the form of exhaust but rather as a motor that requires affective fuel in order to run. The central question, then, that has historically been asked of sexual fetishism ("What has happened to the drive in order for this fetish to emerge?") would have to be replaced with new questions: "What affects are affixed to the fetish object? How are those affects combined?"

Although Tomkins diminishes the importance of the drives in understanding human motivation, his theory does not dispense with them altogether. In fact, for Tomkins, affects and drives share common features but operate in different ways. Both the drive system and the affect system, in his view, are biological, motivational, and informational systems. Both drives and affects have a biological foundation, both urge the organism to take action, and both deliver some sort of information to the organism about that action. The overarching distinction that Tomkins draws between drives and affects is that drives are specific and affects are general. Drives motivate specific actions with specific information whereas affects amplify, reduce, or otherwise alter the motivating information of the drive. Hunger, for instance, specifically motivates one to eat but affects can transform that motivation in a more general way: distress, for instance, can amplify hunger while fear could diminish hunger altogether. While affects do the heavy lifting, then, in terms of human motivation, the drive still plays an important role in motivating many basic actions, especially those related to survival. In fact, Tomkins

[22] Tomkins, *Affect*, 23.

notes that "drive-affect combinations" are the "primary motivational units"[23] in human behavior.

Given that drives and affects share biological, motivational, and informational features, the differences between them in Tomkins' theory might best be expressed in terms of their respective biological, motivational, and informational characteristics. Drives, in Tomkins' view, have a biological basis because they are essential to the "duplication" of either the individual organism or the species.[24] With this definition in hand, Tomkins is willing to conceive of the existence of, minimally, a hunger drive, a pain drive, and a sex drive. Surveying at this full range of drives, however, it is clear that Tomkins' stipulation that "duplication" concerns the species as well as the individual is primarily necessitated by the categorization of sex as a drive: both eating and a pain response are more or less essential for an individual human to live. Sex, despite an often overwhelming fondness for it among human beings, is not. Strictly conceptualizing the sex drive as a matter of the duplication of the species could run the risk of circumscribing an affective theory of sexuality within what anthropologist Jamie F. Lawson has called "the implicit heteronormativity of the discipline" of evolutionary biology, at least as traditionally performed;[25] I will return to this potential problem in the next section.

For now, however, I want to consider the fact that affects, as Tomkins conceives of them, are not necessarily biologically essential for the "duplication" of an individual organism. Lest this be taken as a sign of their insignificance, Tomkins is clear that affects

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[23] Ibid., 36.
[24] Ibid., 5.
[25] James F. Lawson, "Review: Evolution and Human Sexual Behavior," *History and Anthropology* 24 (2013): 515.

are necessary to bring even the most "biologically urgent"[26] drives to bear: "hopelessness," for example, can cause one to abandon the need for air altogether.[27] The hunger drive and the sex drive, too, can both be "sulky," as Tomkins puts it, slipping into the background based on one's affective state.[28] Without the affect of interest, life itself would be impossible, despite the urging of the drives. Both drives and affects, in Tomkins' theory, are essential for human motivation but they differ in terms of their baseline biological importance. Drives are still critical for prompting the organism to attend to basic bodily functions but affects maintain the edge in terms of overall motivational significance.

Drives and affects both motivate the organism but in different ways, using different kinds of information. Drives, for Tomkins, are "designed to initiate instrumental activity"[29] such as breathing or eating whereas affects modify the motivation provided by the drive. While affects can, as just noted, hinder the instrumental activity prompted by the drive in extreme cases, affects typically function as "the general amplifier in the motivational system": affects take the motivation of a drive and make it more urgent. The affect of distress, for example, can "accompany" a drive and make it seem more urgent, as in the case of prolonged hunger. In sum, affects can "modulate, attenuate, interfere with, or even reduce" the basic motivation of the drive.[30]

On the subject of motivation, Tomkins crucially notes that the "urgency" of the drives have "been exaggerated,"[31] arguing that we misattribute much of the "urgency of

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[26] Ibid., 22.
[27] Ibid., 26.
[28] Ibid., 22.
[29] Ibid., 20
[30] Ibid., 26.
[31] Ibid., 32.

the drive state" to the drives rather than their accompanying affects.[32] In other words, we tend to believe that the drives are more motivating than they actually are. Consider, for instance, that hunger can suddenly feel more urgent as one experiences the affect of excitement while reading over a menu or that pain feels more urgent when one has no distractions from the distress that it has caused. Along these same lines—as I will observe later—we tend to misattribute much of the importance of what we label a "sex drive" to the affects of excitement and enjoyment that often surround human sexuality.

In addition to providing different kinds of motivation, drives and affects also convey different kinds of information. For Tomkins, the drive is both a motivational and an informational mechanism that conveys specific information in contrast to the general, additive information provided by an affect. Drives, in Tomkins theory, send "signals"[33] that bring a state of biological urgency to one's conscious awareness. The information of the drive signal is highly specified: it tells the organism "where and when and what to do."[34] Hunger, for example, tells us to take food, put it in our mouths as soon as possible, and swallow it. The drive, for Tomkins, is both the cause and result of this concentrated information: the drive system transmits an information-laden signal to one's consciousness and it is this information that allows the organism to undertake the necessary instrumental action. It is in this sense that it is the "information which 'drives' and a drive which 'informs,' at once."[35]

While affects also trade in information, the information that an affect conveys is both additive and general in contrast to the specific and basic information provided by the

[32] Ibid., 26
[33] Ibid., 18.
[34] Ibid., 21.
[35] Ibid., 18.

drive. Affective information is additive because it accompanies a drive, letting one know that a particular drive "needs [one's] attention."[36] It is general because there is no one-to-one correspondence between drives and affects; an affect like distress, for instance, can accompany "one of a number of drives"[37] and a drive can be accompanied by any number of affects. In other words, whereas a drive tells someone explicitly where, when, and how to act, an affect only gives him or her enough information to formulate some hypotheses about what might be taking place: "I feel distressed. Am I hungry? Am I in pain?"

Overall, a picture of the relative importance of affects and drives in Tomkins' theory is beginning to emerge. While Tomkins holds that both are often necessary for human motivation, the affect system far outstrips the drive system in terms of generality, urgency, complexity, and "transformability."[38] A drive is a single signal that calls for a single instrumental action, but affects can transform this signal in a variety of ways: hunger might be alleviated by enjoyment, exacerbated by distress, sidelined by fear, or interrupted by dissmell. In this account, affects are the true heavyweights of human motivation. For Tomkins, then, the "primary motivational system is the affective system, and the biological drives have motivational impact only when amplified by the affective system."[39] And, as noted above, no matter how "biologically urgent"[40] the drive, affect is still necessary to bring that drive to one's conscious awareness.

At a minimum, then, Tomkins' theory would be amenable to a conceptualization of the drive as a basic impulse that must be modified by affect in order to accrue any motivational importance whatsoever. But what is the sex drive an impulse *for*? Indeed,

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[36] Ibid., 24.
[37] Ibid., 24.
[38] Ibid., 26.
[39] Ibid., 4.
[40] Ibid., 22.

classification of sex as a drive under the reproductive rubric of "duplication" raises questions about its place in an affective theory of sexuality, questions that I consider further as the next section unfolds.

What is the relationship between affects, drives, and sexuality?

What effect might an inverted relationship between affect and drive have on theoretical understandings of sexuality? While Tomkins produces thousands of pages of writing on the primary affects and their respective defining characteristics, he does not leave his readers with a fully-fledged theory of sexuality. What Tomkins does offer across his writing are some starting points for an affective theory of sexuality.

First, Tomkins is clear that affect plays "the central role … in human sexuality."[41] Elsewhere, he makes explicit reference to "the central role of the affect of excitement in sexual experience."[42] Second, he argues that "interest or excitement"[43] is the primary affect of human sexuality and that the relatively "sulky" sex drive[44] is "secondary" to the operation of the affect system.[45] In other writings, Tomkins describes the supposedly "imperious" sex drive as being "notoriously vulnerable to attenuation if the affect of excitement is inhibited."[46] Most importantly, then, Tomkins makes the claim that sexuality is a primarily affective phenomenon grounded in the affect of excitement rather than a sex drive or sexual instinct.

In addition to excitement, Tomkins also identifies other affects that can increase the urgency of a sex drive. While anger can undoubtedly inhibit the sex drive, for

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[41] Tomkins, *Affect*, 74.
[42] Tomkins, "Simulation," 14.
[43] Tomkins, *Affect*, 28.
[44] Ibid., 22.
[45] Ibid., 32.
[46] Tomkins, "Simulation," 13-14.

instance, Tomkins believes that it can also become "a necessary condition for sexual gratification" in the case of sadism.[47] But the affect of enjoyment or joy, as Tomkins notes, is interest's chief co-pilot in the skies of human sexuality:

> There is a positive affect which we call enjoyment or being joyful, in its more intense values, which is expressed in the smile or in the slow deep breathing of joy or both, which may follow orgasm, but which may also be emitted concurrently with the sex drive. If such an affect accompanies sexual intercourse, the total experience is no less intense, but has the quality of joy rather than excitement.[48]

Interest and enjoyment are both positive affects in Tomkins' theory but they are qualitatively in contradistinction to one another. Where interest is marked by an accelerated increase in positive intensity, enjoyment is characterized by a slow, profound sense of relief. I will examine the specific contours of these affects in the next section.

For now, it is worth emphasizing that no matter which affects increase the urgency of the sex drive in Tomkins' theory, it is clear to him that we often misattribute the urgency of sex to the idea of a drive rather than the amplifying affect:

> Consider next the sex drive. Ordinarily the urgency of this drive is amplified by the affective response of interest or excitement. The sexual organ is the site of sexual pleasure, but the thrill of sexuality is more affect than specific sexual pleasure. The panting breathing and the moans and groans of the individual in the midst of sexual experience are the positive analog of the accelerated breathing and cry of distress of the individual in pain. We are not likely to confuse the cry of distress in pain with the pain drive itself, nor to confuse the rapid breathing of one in pain with the latter, but in the case of the sex drive the confusion of drive signal and auxiliary affect is the rule.[49]

While Tomkins is attentive throughout his work to the ways in which his predecessors and contemporaries have underestimated affect, he notes here that we are *especially* prone to conflating the drive or sexual instinct with its amplifying affect in the case of

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[47] Tomkins, *Affect*, 32.
[48] Ibid., 32.
[49] Ibid., 31.

sexuality. Within the context of drive-foundational theories of sexuality, we are accustomed to perceiving sexual arousal as evidence of a libidinal need rather than the product of a complex affective response. Near the end of this chapter, I will consider the reasons for the conflation of drive and affect in the case of sexuality in further detail.

Without the amplified sense of urgency borrowed from affect, Tomkins notes, the sex drive is nothing but a "sulky" force. He observes that "many negative affective responses are capable of attenuating, masking or entirely reducing the sex drive" including "startle, fear, distress, and apathy."[50] A loud thunderclap, a creaking house, a sudden pain, a bored partner: all of these can instantly diminish or at least interrupt the sex drive. As such, Tomkins argues that "the sexual drive in man is extraordinarily vulnerable to inhibition by negative affect,"[51] so much so that he believes Freud himself should have rethought "the role of drive and affect" within the psychoanalytic theory he founded.[52] Simply put, "one must be excited to enjoy the sexual drive" rather than it being the case that the sexual drive somehow naturally leads to excitement.[53]

Proving itself to be more fickle still, the sex drive—as Tomkins conceives of it—can also be inhibited by a diminishing rate of positive affect, even without the aid of a negative affect like fear or distress. Because interest-excitement is defined by an intense, accelerated positive stimulation, the sex drive can wane along with positive affect if the complexity or novelty of the sexual object begins to wear off:

> How much the affect contributes to the urgency of the sex drive is clear when the auxiliary excitement is no longer emitted concurrently with the sex drive. A decrement in excitement with repeated intercourse with the same sex object is common in human sexual experience. It is only the greater complexity of the

[50] Ibid., 32.
[51] Ibid., 32.
[52] Ibid., 32.
[53] Tomkins, "Simulation," 16.

> human sexual partner and the embedding of sexuality in the context of a more complex human relationship which preserves the sexual interest. Wherever the sexual interest is simple the human will be unable to sustain his excitement with the same partner indefinitely. We are suggesting that, although the affect of excitement is initially activated by sexual pleasure, the excitement can also be activated by the novelty of the sexual object.[54]

Tomkins essentially suggests that sexual objects are governed by a law of diminishing returns: the longer one stays with a particular object, the more its novelty wears off, the less likely it is to hold one's interest. Although Tomkins believes that a human sexual partner somehow has "greater complexity" and that a human relationship is "more complex" in ways that can maintain interest "indefinitely," I can also readily observe in the case of sexual fetishism that non-human objects—as well as ideas, bodily functions, and practices—are also characterized by a degree of complexity and novelty that can allow the sexual interest to be preserved indefinitely (see Chapter Two). Complexity, in other words, is in the eye of the beholder. The key insight to be drawn from this passage, then, is that excitement is sustained by the complexity and novelty of its objects.

Thus far, the central thesis of Tomkins' sparse theory of sexuality, is this: the sex drive may be present in but relatively unimportant for motivating sexual behavior. But at this point, given the criticisms I issued to drive-foundational theories of sexuality in the Introduction, I can also observe that Tomkins' stripped-down version of the sex drive bears little resemblance to the teleological, reproductive-oriented sexual instincts of Binet, Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Hirschfeld, and, to an extent, Freud. Indeed, if I were to press on Tomkins' reliance on the logic of the duplication of the species in order to categorize sex as a drive in the first instance, I might begin to question just how essential the sex drive is to an affective theory of sexuality. What does it mean that "sex" is the only drive

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[54] Tomkins, *Affect*, 31.

in Tomkins' theory that requires him to include "duplication of the species" as a definitional characteristic? And what does the "sex drive" itself even mean in a theory where drives have been so thoroughly diminished in their importance relative to affect?

While Tomkins does not notice the conceptual leap he has to make in order to categorize sex as a drive, he does notice that the pain drive, for one, is "quite different from [the] other drives" when measured by the rubric of "duplication."[55] A human clearly cannot survive without food, for example, but a human can "live a lifetime despite continuous pain."[56] And while most drives send signals containing specific information, pain can often send general information; pain can be "diffuse" or even felt in the wrong location.[57] In fact, the ambiguity of pain leads Tomkins to situate pain "midway… between most drives and most affects."[58] The way in which Tomkins handles the pain drive can provide some clues about how I might best position the sex drive in relation to an affective theory of sexuality. The fact that Tomkins is willing to open up a murky conceptual territory between drives and affects before surrendering "duplication" as the conceptual divide between an affect and a drive reinforces a key point made earlier: drives and affects—whatever their differences—have quite a lot in common for Tomkins in terms of their biological, motivational, and informational characteristics. They may have so much in common, in fact, that distinguishing between them may be less important than thinking through their mutual action as "drive-affect interactions."[59]

Tomkins' theoretical investment in outlining a theory of "drive-affect combinations" seems to lie primarily in establishing the interactivity between a dynamic

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[55] Ibid., 32.
[56] Ibid., 32.
[57] Ibid., 32.
[58] Ibid., 32.
[59] Ibid., 17.

system of affect and a relatively simple system of biological need, in exploring the interplay between these specific, narrowly-focused signals, and the complex, transformational system that can amplify, reduce, or otherwise modify those signals into a wide range of human behaviors. This structure of Tomkins' theory—analogue affects layered over digital ("on or off") drives—is part of what allows him to work so productively in the conceptual space "between two and infinity"[60] mentioned earlier. But does the sex drive constitute a biological need? And what does the sex drive mean in the context of its radical dependence on affect in Tomkins' work?

In a summary of his work on the relative importance of affects and drives, Tomkins makes a key point regarding the importance of drives that could help sort through the question of the sex drive's place—or lack thereof—in an affective theory of sexuality:

> It is the affects rather than the drives which are the primary human motives. First, the affects constitute the primary motivational system not only because the drives necessarily require amplification from the affects, but because the affects are sufficient motivators in the absence of drives.[61]

Whatever implicit concept of the sex drive remains operational in Tomkins' theory, it already bears a scarce resemblance to Freud's "sexual instinct—a strong, river-like force that must be channeled or diverted in its flow through human development; rather, for Tomkins, the drive is more like a flickering pilot light on a furnace with affect primary responsible for the combustion. And Tomkins' note here that "the affects are sufficient motivators in the absence of drives" makes the key point that a theory of sexuality need not begin with the drive. Just as the sex drive can be amplified by the affect of interest, the affect of interest can also motivate sexual behavior on its own. An affective theory of

[60] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 15.
[61] Tomkins, "Simulation," 16.

sexuality can either work apart from the drive altogether or alternatively conceive of it is a directionless impulse that has no meaning apart from its interaction with affect—in either event, the overall shape of an affective theory of sexuality is the same.

What we commonly term "sexuality," then, can be said to emerge along at least two different trajectories: either some sort of initial drive or sexual instinct with no pre-programmed goal becomes amplified, attenuated, or transformed by affect or, alternately, the affects of excitement and/or enjoyment motivate sexuality on their own, perhaps even recruiting the drive for some added momentum along the way. Either way, the affect system so far outstrips the drive system in terms of motivational significance that an affective theory of sexuality renders any lingering concept of a sex drive relatively toothless with respect to the conceptual pitfalls outlined in the Introduction.

But if affects can motivate in the absence of the drive and if Tomkins is willing to allow ambiguous drives like pain to occupy an undecided conceptual territory between the affect and the drive, is it even possible to theorize a sex drive within an affective theory of sexuality? In other words, what is the precise role of affects and drives in human sexuality? As I will briefly explore later in this chapter and take up in more detail in Chapter Three and the Coda, one consequence of an affective theory of sexuality is that it can productively blur the lines between what we think of as sexuality and what we think of as excitement and/or enjoyment. If sexuality is affective then traditional distinctions between affect and sexuality begin to break down the more developed an affective theory of sexuality becomes. If this is the case, I might still preserve Tomkins' basic outline of the way in which drive-affect interactions function, but I might also begin to question in what sense the sex drive is a *sex* drive specifically. At present, however, I

can note that the sex drive—whether or not it has a place in an affective theory of sexuality and whatever its concrete shape—is exceeded by affect in terms of motivational importance and that affect itself is sufficient to motivate sexuality.

What are "interest or excitement" and "enjoyment or joy?"

At this point, I can add to the growing list of defining parameters for an affective theory of sexuality: The affects of interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy surpass the sex drive in terms of motivational importance in sexual behavior. As such, interest-excitement and enjoyment or joy are the two positive affects that primarily define human sexuality. In order to further define an affective theory of sexuality, then, I must also define the affect of interest-excitement and the affect of enjoyment-joy beyond the brief summaries above.

Interest-excitement (shortened here to "excitement") is activated in Tomkins' theory by "a critical rate of increase in the density of neural firing."[62] In this respect, excitement is similar in its activation to fear and startle; excitement simply has the lowest slope in its "gradient of stimulation" relative to these other affective responses.[63] A gunshot startles because it rapidly increases the density of stimulation whereas the sound of a distant crowd will activate excitement instead.[64] As Sedgwick and Frank have noted, the language of "neural firing" is biologically apocryphal,[65] and Tomkins himself later trades that language for the term "information," asserting that excitement is activated by "any rate of change of information (which is within optimal limits)."[66] What is essential and what remains unchanged across these accounts is the fact that excitement is defined

[62] Tomkins, *Affect*, 140.
[63] Ibid., 140.
[64] Ibid., 140.
[65] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 10.
[66] Tomkins, *Affect*, 188.

by an upward slope, an increase in stimulation that is neither so sudden as to be alarming nor so gradual as to induce boredom. These "optimal limits" can vary by individual: some are satisfied with the slow drip of new information in a mystery novel, others will skip to the end, just as some startle easily and others do not.

Like the activation of any affect, the activation of excitement is contingent on the presence or absence of other affective states. In parallel with the idea that the sex drive can be impeded by a lack of excitement, the activation of excitement itself can be impeded by the activation of negative affective states. But given the observation that affects can take any other affect as an object, excitement can also precede or emerge out of negative affects like fear and startle: one stimulus, Tomkins notes, "may evoke first surprise, then interest, or it may evoke interest and then surprise."[67] There is a crucial "lability,"[68] then, between the activation of excitement and other affects (like fear and startle) that involve an increase in stimulation: something that initially frightens a person (like a gunshot) may soon excite them ("Where did that gunshot come from?") and something that initially excites a person may soon startle them ("Wait … is that … blood?"). This lability of excitement plays an important role in understanding human sexuality through an affective lens: excitement borders so closely on other positive affects that it is easily activated by other densely stimulating experiences.

The activation of excitement in Tomkins' theory also depends on a human's idiosyncratic relationships with particular objects. Different objects can evoke, variously, love, fear, or other affects; furthermore, the same object that evokes fear in one person may activate excitement in another. To borrow an idiom, one person's affective trash is

[67] Ibid., 140.
[68] Ibid., 141.

another's affective treasure. As I noted earlier, too, "the excitement affect can be emitted to food, to automobiles, to an idea, in short to anything which is exciting to the person who is experiencing it."[69] Tomkins' theory allows for individual relationships with various objects to determine the activation of excitement. This allowance is crucial for understanding the wide range of sexual objects that an individual can take up: excitement is idiosyncratic and so, too, are sexual objects. An affective theory of sexuality cannot hope to encompass all of human sexuality with a few totalizing principles; rather, it must be willing to trace these idiosyncratic relationships in a productively weak manner (see Chapter Three).

But excitement, for Tomkins, is more than just a passing, idiosyncratic curiosity about an object; excitement also plays a central role in the preservation of life, a role that many of Tomkins' contemporaries would normally attribute to drives. Most notably, Tomkins argues that "to think as to engage in any other human activity, one must care, [and] one must be excited."[70] Excitement is responsible both for directing the "human being" toward "what is *necessary*" for life and toward the full range of surplus objects that "it is *possible* for him to be interested in."[71] In other words, excitement is "the major source of drive amplification,"[72] not "a derivative of the drives"[73] but the drives' chief engine. The actions called for by the drive signals, and even the very ability to move, are "critically dependent on a continuing support from interest."[74] If sexuality seems to be a pervasive force that can accrue to any object or scenario—so much so that we often

[69] Ibid., 31.
[70] Ibid., 188.
[71] Ibid., 188.
[72] Ibid., 188.
[73] Ibid., 188.
[74] Ibid., 189.

conceive of it as a drive first and foremost—perhaps it is because excitement, the primary affect of sexuality, is necessary for humans to engage with any object or take any action.

Excitement can take a wide range of objects including physical objects or stimuli, memories, thoughts, sensations, and ideas. Like any affect, excitement can take another affect as its object:[75] a person can be excited by her own shame, the idea of shame, or the memory of a past shame. In affixing itself to a diverse set of objects, excitement behaves like a chameleon, matching itself in intensity, texture, and shape to its objects and activators: in the case of sexual intercourse, for example, excitement can be "massive," but, in other situations, excitement will "match" itself to "the most subtle cognitive capacities."[76] As Tomkins puts it, excitement is "capable of sufficiently graded, flexible innervation and combination."[77] Excitement wraps itself around an object, hugging its curves and responding to its varying intensities. When an infant first encounters a new object, Tomkins notes, she "varies [her] perspectives, perceptual and conceptual" by "look[ing] at the object now from one angle, now from another."[78] As she reacts to a new object, her excitement is characterized by a constant shifting of perspective in an attempt to understand it. Given this quality of excitement, we should expect humans to approach and conceptualize their sexual objects in a painstakingly thorough and multi-perspectival fashion. I will show in the next chapter that sexual fetishists do approach their objects with this same heightened level of multi-perspectival excitement.

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[75] Ibid., 189.
[76] Ibid., 189.
[77] Ibid., 189.
[78] Ibid., 191.

If excitement is marked by an optimal increase in stimulation, enjoyment is characterized by release and "relief."[79] Tomkins writes that the enjoyment response is "activated … by any relatively steep reduction of the density of stimulation and neural firing."[80] Enjoyment, then, is qualitatively aligned with excitement in terms of its positivity but runs more or less orthogonal to excitement in terms of its activation or, as Tomkins puts it, enjoyment is "a positive affect which is distinguishable from excitement in response pattern and experienced quality."[81] Where excitement is defined by an upward slope and an optimal increase in stimulation, enjoyment is defined by a downward slope and a decrease in stimulation. And just as excitement requires an increase in stimulation that is neither too sudden nor too gradual, enjoyment requires an optimally "steep"[82] reduction of stimulation. As Tomkins writes: "a gradual reduction of distress … may provide no secondary reward of joy."[83] Elsewhere, Tomkins evocatively describes enjoyment as "a luxury response."[84]

If excitement is the motivating force behind even the most fundamental human behavior, then enjoyment functions as the universal human safety valve, readily adapting itself to any affective scenario that involves a high level of stimulation and reducing tension. In this way, enjoyment is contingent on prior affective states that either increase stimulation (startle, fear, excitement) or are already operating at a heightened level of stimulation (anger, distress). As Tomkins puts it: "A steep gradient reduction in density of stimulation necessarily requires a prior level of sufficient density of stimulation, so

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[79] Ibid., 204.
[80] Ibid., 204.
[81] Ibid., 203.
[82] Ibid., 139.
[83] Ibid., 204.
[84] Tomkins, "Simulation," 32.

that the requisite change is possible."[85] Most succinctly put, enjoyment "operate[s] on the principle of stimulation reduction."[86] All stimulating affects are at risk of sliding down the slippery slope of joy, provided some turn, some moment of release. In this respect, enjoyment is a partner to excitement in that it allows for the stimulation perpetuated by excitement to be diminished before it becomes overwhelming or unbearable.

Whereas excitement provides primary motivation for humans to live and engage with the world on an individual basis, enjoyment, for Tomkins, aids in the generation of human sociality. Smiling, the facial motion that accompanies and defines the affect of enjoyment, is the primary method of communication between mother and child in the early stages of life. "This dyadic interaction," Tomkins notes, "is inherently social inasmuch as the satisfaction of the self is at the same time the satisfaction of the other."[87] The nature of this interaction patterns the human social bonds that proceed therefrom. "Shared enjoyment," as Tomkins puts it, is essential for socializing, conversation, and physical intimacy. And while "the affect of excitement … is shared for most of the [sexual] interaction" between two people, Tomkins does concede that it is "customary that the smile of shared enjoyment follows the orgasm and the reduction of excitement."[88] Excitement may lead people to objects and to each other, but enjoyment reinforces those bonds, including sexual bonds between people and between people and objects.

Just as excitement can be activated by a variety of different kinds of objects, enjoyment can also be activated by a wide range of objects but also by memory and even by anticipation. If recalling a meeting with a friend, for instance, "first arouses

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[85] Tomkins, *Affect*, 204.
[86] Ibid., 142.
[87] Ibid., 219.
[88] Ibid., 226.

excitement which then suddenly is reduced," enjoyment can result. Similarly, if anticipating a meeting induces excitement, continuing to indulge in "visualizing" that meeting "might sufficiently reduce the excitement so that the smile of joy might be evoked."[89] But, above all, enjoyment seems to be contingent on excitement. Tomkins writes: "In order to enjoy seeing someone or something familiar one must first have been sufficiently interested, so that the sudden reduction of this interest will constitute a sufficient change in density of stimulation to evoke the smiling response."[90] Enjoyment of a sexual object, then, will depend on an ability to maintain a continually renewed interest in that object sufficient enough, at least, to allow for interludes of enjoyment.

What is sexuality? What is not sexuality?

From the seeming boundlessness of Tomkins' theory and his sparse comments on sexuality, I can now produce something of an initial sketch of an affective theory of sexuality. First, sexuality is primarily affective; the sex drive, whether or not we place it in an affective theory of sexuality and whatever its concrete shape, plays a relatively minimal role in both human sexuality and the sphere of human motivation writ large. Second, excitement is the primary affect of human sexuality. Third, excitement, like any affect, can be affixed to or activated by any object, even other affects, including negative ones. Fourth, excitement, however it emerges, is characterized by an optimal increase in stimulation; it is flexible, labile, and adaptable to almost any object and, as such, humans should be expected to take a wide range of sexual objects including ones that would tend to be labeled as abnormal fetishistic in non-affective theories of sexuality. Fifth, excitement is motivated by the complexity and novelty of its objects; as such, the

[89] Ibid., 205.
[90] Ibid., 204.

question an affective theory of sexuality would ask about non-normative sexual object would be "What does an individual person currently find complex or novel about his or her sexual objects?" and not "How did the sex drive come to be attached to these objects?" Sixth, enjoyment is a common secondary affect in human sexuality and it is characterized by an optimal decrease in stimulation; enjoyment pairs nicely with excitement because it reduces stimulation in an innately pleasurable way.

If excitement and enjoyment are the defining affects of human sexuality with other affects often circulating as objects of those positive affects, sexuality could be conceived as a set of *affective curves* that are always characterized by the affects of excitement and/or enjoyment. As I will detail in Chapter Two, Tomkins perceives affects as slopes defined by levels of inherently positive or negative stimulation over time. For Tomkins, then, sexuality must always coincide with the curves of excitement or enjoyment. These two affects, for example, can either occur concurrently or in sequence: someone can enjoy her excitement in the moment, for example, or she can experience the sweet release of enjoyment *after* a period of intense excitement. Whether it is the curve of excitement or enjoyment in isolation, or the curve of excitement followed by excitement, or the curve of enjoyment that suddenly ramps up into excitement once more, or the curve of enjoyment braided throughout the curve of excitement, or the curve of enjoyment that has taken another affect as its object, sexuality seems to emerge in the occurrence and/or the interplay of excitement, enjoyment, and the many objects and affects these two affects can take.

Given the flexibility of excitement and its ability to "be emitted to" any object,[91] an affective theory of sexuality would also primarily make idiosyncratic claims about what objects individuals find exciting and why. It would then seek to situate these objects within the context of affective curves of excitement and enjoyment, discovering the ways in which these objects are caught in the back-and-forth between these two affects. As I will argue in Chapter Three, an affective theory of sexuality is a productive because weak theory that eschews the overarching explanations of strong theory in favor of rich engagements with individual objects in localized contexts. An affective theory of sexuality would also investigate the ways in which other (and potentially negative) affects could be taken up as objects within affective curves of excitement and enjoyment by asking questions such as: How does excitement combine with negative affects like shame? And given that many negative affects (like anger) involve an intense concentration of stimulation, an affective theory of sexuality would also try to determine by what means these negative affects can find release along the slippery slope of enjoyment. In the next chapter, these questions will be brought to bear on sexual fetishes that involve seemingly bad objects and/or negative affects.

But if we diminish the motivational significance of the sex drive and situate affects instead as the foundation of human sexuality instead, how can one differentiate between affect and sexuality? What is the difference between being excited by an object and being "turned on" by it, between enjoying a television show and having a sexual response to it? To these questions, however, I might pose a different set of queries in response: Why would we need to differentiate between affect and sexuality if sexuality is affective? Why do we need to adjudicate the differences between excitement and sexual

[91] Ibid., 31.

excitement, between enjoyment and sexual pleasure? It is true that a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality does not contain strong tools for drawing harsh dividing lines between the sphere of sexuality and the sphere of excitement. How could it when sexuality and excitement are consubstantial in an affective theory of sexuality? But this inability to set sexuality apart in its own sphere might be a conceptual benefit of Tomkins' theory rather than a limitation. Indeed, a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality might challenge us to think of sexuality not as an exceptional subset of human experience but rather as a manifestation of the affect of excitement or, perhaps, a threshold beyond which excitement becomes felt as sexual. In other words, in an affective theory of sexuality, the difference between sexuality and excitement might be a difference in degree rather than kind.

I noted above Tomkins' belief that "the confusion of drive signal and auxiliary affect is the rule"[92] rather than the exception when it comes to sex. Tomkins argues that we are particularly likely to believe that affect is merely ancillary in understanding human sexuality. A Tomkinsian theory of sexuality is disorienting chiefly because it issues a challenge to the idea that sex is a special subset of human behavior that requires its own unique, motivating mechanism to come into being. A similar idea is at play in the common resistance to Freud's supposed claim that "everything is sexual," a kind of resistance that Freud, in his *Autobiographical Study* deems "so easily explicable by the psycho-analytic theory that it [is] almost impossible to be misled by [it]."[93] Whether it is for moralistic, sentimental, or political reasons, the fight to maintain sexuality as its own independent province of human behavior has been a recurring theme in lay reactions to

[92] Ibid., 31.
[93] Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (Vintage, 1999), 49.

psychoanalytic theories of sexuality. Breastfeeding cannot be sexual, the anti-Freudian protest goes, because sex is a neatly delimited domain that exists apart from the everyday.

Tomkins does not offer relief from this moralistic panic in the form of a theory in which certain things are decidedly sexual and others are not. For Tomkins, "everything" is *not* sexual, true, but everything can be exciting and every exciting thing can be sexual. In introducing the topic of infantile sexuality to a skeptical readership, Freud offers this observation: "No one who has seen a baby sinking back satiated from the breast and falling asleep with flushed cheeks and a blissful smile can escape the reflection that this picture persists as a prototype of the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life."[94] Those who exhibit a moralistic resistance to Freud's work would react to this passage by asserting the innocence of the baby and stressing the dissimilarities between breastfeeding and sexual satisfaction. A Tomkinsian approach to this same passage would still give the moralist cause for concern but it would approach the question of sexuality from a different angle. For Tomkins, it is the affect of enjoyment—not the sexual instinct—that would serve as the common link between the sated infant and the post-coital smile. And for an affective theory of sexuality, the question of whether or not the infant is participating in sexuality is less important than thinking through what the infant might find enjoyable about breastfeeding. In other words, Freud might be closer to understanding what is "sexual" about breastfeeding when he points to "the warm flow of milk" as the "cause of the pleasurable sensation"[95] than he is when he tries to assert the existence of a controversial infantile libido.

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[94] Freud, "Three Essays," 182.
[95] Ibid., 181.

As compared with Freud, a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality is much more interested in the granular affective details of what we commonly perceive to be sexuality than it is in the underlying principles that are often used to adjudicate between sexuality and other kinds of human behavior. In other words, an affective theory of sexuality would put affect itself at the forefront while ignoring questions about whether an affective response is sexual or not, not because these questions cannot be asked but because they might no longer be relevant or interesting. In this respect, an affective theory of sexuality is a weak theory that prefers description and interrogation to categorization and taxonomization, a quality which I consider further in Chapter Three. Sexuality scintillates precisely because of its seemingly deviant forms but when these deviant forms are translated into the universal language of affect, the sharp edges of sexuality begin to wear off. In Chapter Three—and in the Coda—I will continue to consider the implications of the way in which an affective theory of sexuality calls sexuality itself into question as an object of study.

Why is fetishism the starting point for an affective theory of sexuality?

In the Introduction, I argued that sexual fetishism is a useful starting point in the broader project of this dissertation precisely because, following Foucault, fetishism functions as the "model perversion"[96] within the deployment of drive-foundational theories of sexuality. Fetishism's constitutive role in this deployment can be seen in the ways that it has been characterized as both normal and pathological, thoroughly mundane and yet so "specially remarkable,"[97]as Freud would say, that it requires special explanation. At this point, I can add that an affective theory of sexuality might be able to have a less tortured

[96] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 154.
[97] Freud, "Three Essays," 154.

and more straightforward relationship to sexual fetishism; in so doing, it can also provide a pointed contrast to drive-foundational theories which have relied on a certain etiological orientation toward fetishism for their very construction. Divorced from the whiplash of drive-foundational theory's deeply-knotted relationship with sexual fetishism, an affective theory of sexuality can meaningfully explore sexual fetishism as an affective relationship to objects, practices and ideas that is interesting because of the way in which affects and particular objects combine—not because it is atypical and not because it is inherently different from other forms of sexuality.

But a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality need not necessarily normalize sexual fetishism or other forms of sexuality that have been categorized as pathological in drive-foundational theories when it can simply render sexual fetishism unexceptional and unremarkable by analyzing it through the lens of excitement instead. By seeing sexual variation—and particularly sexual fetishism—as mundane forms of sexuality that are not departures from more normative forms of sexuality, an affective theory of sexuality can explore this variation unhindered by a fixation on its origins or its social meaning. In so doing, however, the continuing feminist and queer attachment to the illocutionary force of the category of perversion would be undermined, an outcome that I explore further in Chapter Three.

Within the specific context of the project of constructing an affective theory of sexuality, however, sexual fetishism is a helpful starting point precisely because it is so variegated. If the affect of excitement, which is at the center of human sexuality, "can be emitted to food, to automobiles, to an idea, in short to anything which is exciting to the

person who is experiencing it,"[98] then analyzing a sexual phenomenon characterized by a wide degree of possible sexual objects would be a promising avenue for a first inquiry. Sexual fetishism, in other words, may be the perfect proving grounds on which to explore the lability and flexibility of excitement and the other affects that can play a role in human sexuality. The goal of the next chapter is to begin this exploration in earnest, to apply these initial notes to several key bodies of literature in order to demonstrate the collected way in which a theory of affect can account for human sexual variation.

[98] Tomkins, *Affect* 31.

Chapter Two
Feeling Fetishes

Evasive Terms

In 1977, C.C. Gosselin, then an undergraduate at Birkbeck College in London,[1] wrote a research report summarizing the personalities of "100 people sexually sensitive to rubber in sheet or garment form"—whom he located by distributing surveys through New York sex shops and bookstores—as compared to a control group of people with no reported sexual fetishes.[2] The justification for Gosselin's large-scale study was the fact that most academic studies of sexual fetishism derive their data from fetishists "who have sought professional psychological help," limiting their explanation to "one to three case histories together with … details of treatment and its justification in psychoanalytic or behavioural modification terms"[3]; Gosselin, on the other hand, wanted to examine fetishists outside of a clinical setting in order to construct a more representative profile through his interviews of the figure whom he dubs "the average rubber fetishist."

In the discussion section of his report, Gosselin expresses frustration with the disjuncture between his subjects' self-descriptions and the pre-conceived terms of his study:

> In talking to subjects during interviews subsequent to their completing their questionnaires, most admit to feeling guilty about their predilection and allow that it has caused dissension at times within their marital or other sexual relationships. They use evasive terms in discussing the subject, saying that they are "interested" in rubber rather than (as they admit when pressed) that it arouses them sexually: they speak of their "liking," say that they regard it as "a fun thing," yet in separate conversations with their partners it would appear that in a number of cases the cooperation of their partner or partners in wearing the material (or allowing the

[1] C.C. Gosselin, "The Average Rubber Fetishist," (BS thesis, Birkbeck College, 1977).
[2] Gosselin, "Rubber Fetishist," 1.
[3] Ibid., 4.

> subject to wear it) both increases his sexual arousal and, paradoxically, does much to relieve tensions within the subject.[4]

When Gosselin's subjects speak in the unmistakably affective vocabulary of "interest," he labels their language "evasive" and feels the need to "press" them further in order to determine that their interest is indeed linked to sexual arousal, even going so far as to interrogate their partners instead in order to obtain confirmation that rubber sexually arouses them. In fact, for Gosselin, confirming that his subjects are sexually aroused by rubber is a necessary precondition for their participation; the interrogation described above takes place under the guise of determining "whether members of the experimental group studied can be formally classified as rubber fetishists or not."[5] In Gosselin's eyes, there is a clear border between mere "interest" and full-on "sexual arousal" that would separate a rubber fetishist from, say, a rubber enthusiast.

Gosselin's approach to his subjects lays bare the underlying presumption—and the central presumption challenged by both this and the previous chapter—that interest and sexual arousal are fundamentally different and mutually exclusive, that any fetishist who claims "interest" as a primary orientation toward a fetish object would be willfully obfuscating a truer, more sexual intention. By observing that rubber "both increases his sexual arousal and, paradoxically, does much to relieve tensions within the subject,"[6] Gosselin also signals his mystification at the way in which rubber can simultaneously seem to excite his subjects' arousal while also relieving their tension, as if these two effects were not just incompatible, but antithetical. And lastly, Gosselin's need to pin down whether or not his subjects' engagement with rubber is sexual or not speaks to his

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[4] Ibid., 19.
[5] Ibid., 19.
[6] Ibid., 19.

need to maintain sexuality as a special sphere of human behavior set apart from other modes of engagement with an object.

Under an affective theory of sexuality, on the other hand, the replies of Gosselins' subjects do not necessarily need to be read as evasive or paradoxical. Subjects reporting that they are "interested" in rubber would cohere neatly with Tomkins' insights that interest or excitement acts as the primary affect of human sexuality, and that affect plays "the central role … in human sexuality."[7] On this view, too, Gosselins' subjects do not have to be seen to be obfuscating a deeper, inner truth about their relationship to rubber; rather, they may be forthrightly and accurately characterizing their investment in rubber as one of "interest." And rubber is indeed an object marked by a degree of complexity and novelty sufficient to arouse the interest of those who encounter it. Consider that, in the 1960s, one rubber fetishist produces this vivid description of the material in his amateur psychology of rubber fetishism:

> The material, especially with a trace of talc on the surface, is extremely agreeable to the touch. It is cool at first touch, it warms rapidly, it is soft to the fingertips. In fact, the tactile satisfaction of rubber sheet [sic] such as a latex or steam-cured rubber is considerable. I have never come across anyone who has claimed that it was in any way disagreeable. In fact, the touch of this material is almost identical with that of the skin.[8]

In light of this rich description of the textural thrills of rubber, it would seem reductive to dismiss Gosselin's subjects' claims of "interest" as a smokescreen for a hidden sexual motive; to the contrary, the affect of interest may be one of the most revealing conceptual lenses through which to understand a phenomenon like rubber fetishism.

Gosselin's confusion at the fact that rubber can function simultaneously as source of excitement and relief could also be quickly clarified up by an affective theory of

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[7] Tomkins, "Simulation," 14.
[8] C.J. Traill-Hill, *The Psychology of Rubber: Part 1* (London: The Natural Rubber Company, 1964), 76.

sexuality, which can understand sexuality as a set of affective curves characterized by the interplay between excitement and enjoyment. In Tomkins' theory, it would be entirely possible for a rubber fetishist to be excited by his enjoyment of rubber and to enjoy his excitement of rubber, or to quickly vacillate between excitement and enjoyment in his engagement with the material. Gosselin's observations on the seeming incompatibility between sexuality and relaxation would not be confusing in this framework; rather, they would be consistent with the way in which sexuality is manifested affectively.

And lastly, an affective theory of sexuality would be able to sidestep Gosselin's pressing need to determine whether or not a particular interest is "sexual." Because an affective theory of sexuality perceives sexuality as being primarily affective—as being, in fact, consubstantial with the affects of interest and enjoyment— it also accepts that it may be difficult or impossible to locate a border between—or even differentiate—excitement and sexual excitement. Gosselin encounters people with a strong interest in rubber and asks, "Is it sexual?" but an affective theory of sexuality can accept this stated interest at face value and make further inquiries about its precise shape. Allowing the idea of a division between affect and sexuality to remain blurry is the exact gesture that allows for this inquiry; in fact, producing an affective theory of sexuality is a matter of refocusing on aspects of sexuality that can be muddied by an inordinate focus on the more etiological and/or definitional questions that are often posed to forms of sexual variation.

Above all, Gosselin's report illustrates two of the central themes of this chapter: First, the affective qualities of sexual fetishism are salient enough that they appear even within the scholarly and clinical frameworks that tend to ignore them. Even as Gosselin insistently recodes his subjects' interests as "sexual," he nonetheless leaves their original

affective language intact. And second, given the fact that Gosselin's subjects use different and more affective terms than he would to describe their relationship to rubber, one might suspect that the affective qualities of sexual fetishism would be even more salient in texts produced outside of these frameworks—a possibility that I also explore in this chapter. Across genres, literatures, and theoretical modes, the affective qualities of sexual fetishism are clear but they have not yet been collated. The project of this chapter is twofold: to provide evidence for the conceptual viability of an affective theory of sexuality and to begin to apply that theory across various affective readings of fetishistic sexual practices.

In the Introduction, I reviewed the classic literature on sexual fetishism, noting that sexual fetishism as an object of scholarly study emerges in a complex network of late nineteenth-century French psychology, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century sexology, and Freudian psychoanalysis. Using Foucault, I argued that these literatures reveal the production of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct through an etiological focus on sexual fetishism. Although certain affective notes can be found in this early literature, I will read different bodies of fetish literature for their affective qualities in this chapter: First, I read the late twentieth-century fetish newsletters currently housed in the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction at Indiana University, newsletters that first emerged out of sexual fetish communities in the U.S. after the decline of obscenity laws with the rise of independent publishing. Second, I read a more specific and contemporary text: an Internet forum for sneezing fetishists. I will follow up these readings of non-clinical literatures with two affective readings of clinical literature: one grounded in an overview mid twentieth-century U.S. and British behaviorist

literature that documents attempts to cure sexual fetishism through aversion therapy, the other taken from a 1982 article on erotic vomiting. In reading the broader literatures—fetish forums and behaviorist literature—from a more general perspective, I am primarily invested in offering initial evidence for the viability of affect as a primary lens for analyzing human sexuality. But in the more specified readings—sneezing fetish forum and erotic vomiting report—I want to attempt to further define the contours of the affective theory of sexuality in Chapter One. In other words, I want to start to trace the affective curves of erotic vomiting and sneezing fetishism, respectively, inasmuch as they can be found in these more focused texts. My overall goal in bringing this broad range of literatures and readings together under one heading is to prove that the primacy of affect in sexual fetishism is readily evident—to put it simply—no matter where one looks.

In the broader structure of the dissertation, this chapter is my attempt to both apply and expand upon the theoretical framework developed in Chapter One by bringing Tomkins' theory of affect into direct conversation with texts rather than considering it in abstract isolation. By overlaying this Tomkinsian theoretical apparatus onto these texts, I want to begin to theorize fetishism as a complex affective relation to objects, practices, and ideas—not as a mere deflection of a drive or a deviation of the sexual instinct. By also including literature grounded in drive-foundational theories of sexuality in this chapter, I want to demonstrate that it is possible to produce an affective theory of sexual fetishism even out of theories which elide affect either deliberately or as a function of their focus on the etiology of sexual fetishism. The purpose of this chapter is first, to demonstrate that an affective reading is both justified and viable, and second, to show that affective readings of sexual fetishism can ask different and more descriptive

questions of fetishistic practices: How does a fetish feel? Why do particular objects cause excitement or enjoyment or both? How might we see a fetish differently when questions of its etiology are bracketed?

Where the first chapter moved programmatically through a series of questions, this chapter functions primarily as a preliminary body of evidence for some of the initial answers I offered to those questions. First, I will briefly situate two of the literatures and readings under examination here—twentieth-century fetish newsletters and contemporary Internet fetish forums—within the overall history of fetish literature located at the Kinsey Institute, where I conducted research as a John Money Fellow in the summer of 2013. Following this history, I will turn to the readings of the texts themselves, which I present in four sections: first, a reading of fetish newsletters; second, a reading of an Internet forum for sneezing fetishism; third, a reading of aversion therapy literature; and fourth, a reading of erotic vomiting. This chapter, then, unfolds in two halves, the first focusing on the affective elements of non-clinical literature, the latter proving that they are still salient even within clinical literature that tends to analyze fetishism through the concept of a drive or sexual instinct.

Introduction to Fetish Literature

In order to understand the historical context behind two of the readings in this chapter—fetish newsletters and the sneezing fetish forum—I should first briefly review the history of twentieth and twenty-first century fetish literature in a Western context. The history of the distribution of printed material about sexual fetishism outside of medical and academic spheres is essentially coextensive with the invention of the daguerreotype and the democratization of printing practices. Fetish photography properly begins in the late

nineteenth century but booms during early twentieth century, led by figures like John Coutts (a.k.a. John Willie, founder of famous pulp magazine *Bizarre*) and BDSM photographer Irving Klaw.[9] In these early days, images constitute the social currency of fetish networks; for his part, for example, Coutts "was active in establishing … a social network of shoe and other fetishists" through phots during the mid-twentieth century.[10]

More mainstream varieties of sexual fetishism make their extra-academic textual debut in the pages of pulp magazines. In the early twentieth century, John Willie's *Bizarre* functions as a textual site for the circulation of material on BDSM, shoe fetishism, and transvestism. In the 1950s, the digest-style magazine *Exotique* also becomes a staple for fetish erotica, publishing material on rubber fetishism, leather fetishism, and forced feminization. And although dedicated publications on most specific forms of sexual fetishism will not emerge until the late twentieth century, the pulpy 1930s shoe fetish publication *High Heel Magazine* was able to sustain a readership based presumably on the popularity of the fetish.

Publishers of this early fetish literature were typically able to avoid prosecution under obscenity laws because their particular erotic content could be produced without the use of nudity. Because many fetishes are not immediately legible as sexual in the conventional sense because of their non-genital focus, they are able to slip under the censor's radar. As Julia Pine notes, John Willie was able to use "coded language, double entendre, and a complex semiotics that amounts to what Mikhail Bakhtin called the

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[9] Linda Dupret, *Dark Sex: the Dupret Collection of Fetish Photography* (London: Erotic Print Society, 2002).

[10] Chuck Kleinhans, "Shoe Fetish Photos" (paper presented at the Chicago Area Seminar on Culture and the Arts, Chicago, Illinois, February 16th, 1982).

'double-voiced discourse'" in order to avoid charges of obscenity.[11] By this same logic, photos depicting corset fetishism, shoe fetishism, glove fetishism, and shoe fetishism were freely circulated in Britain and the U.S., as evidenced by their omnipresence in the home collections available at the Kinsey Institute.

More specific fetishistic interests make their dedicated textual debut in scrapbook form. Because fetish objects often intersect with seemingly banal objects of discussion in popular discourse, fetishists could gather text pertaining to their fetish from various cultural sources instead of relying solely on the pages of magazines like *Bizarre* or *Exotique*. One set of 1949 notebooks housed at the Kinsey Institute, for example, appears to be the work of an anonymous collector who has pasted every piece of spanking material he can find, including letters to the editor, parental advice columns, comics, illustrations, clippings, and photos. Scrapbooks like these predict the creation of newsletters dedicated to single fetishes later in the twentieth century.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the stars align for the widespread production of fetish literature. As obscenity laws fade, laser and inkjet printers begin to allow independent publishers to work from within their own homes. It is in the 1970s, too, that the San Fernando Valley first takes on the moniker "Porn Valley" thanks to the rise of cheap video production and the concentration of pornographers in the area.[12] During the heyday of Porn Valley, these pornographers produce several glossy and generally short-lived fetish magazines with a more specific focus than the mid-century pulps. *Milk Magazine*, for example, takes aim at lactation fetishists with several full-page spreads of milk

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[11] Julia Pine, "In Bizarre Fashion: The Double-Voiced Discourse of John Willie's Fetish Fantasia," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22 (2013): 1.
[12] Helen Scheumaker and Shirley T. Wajda, eds. *Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 406.

leaking or shooting from nipples. *Poppin Mamas* and *Before & After* are short-lived pregnancy fetish magazines that showcase pregnant bellies and present readers with stories about ravenous pregnant lesbians.

Belly Button Magazine provides perhaps the most typical example of Porn Valley's casual tourism of sexual fetishes. The first issue stays true to its name: erotic belly button images accompany descriptions of a sex worker named "Big Bertha" who is reportedly so large that "she could sheath in the folds of her belly button the longest dong in the world."[13] By its second issue, however, *Belly Button Magazine* abandons its original focus and features a variety of generic group sex photos instead. Based on the pattern of magazine publication that can be traced at the Kinsey Institute, this is likely the last issue of the magazine ever produced. During this time, Porn Valley pornographers rely on the rarity of sexual fetishes to pique reader interest for a brief window but ultimately cannot rely on them to pay the bills.

But one Porn Valley fetish publication manages to operate on a more sustainable publication model and, as a result, it plays a central and enduring role in the textual history of sexual fetishism: *Fetish Times*, an expansive newspaper published in Burbank, California (and later Van Nuys, California) that serves as the premier print hub for sexual fetishism in the late twentieth-century United States. *Fetish Times* runs from 1972 to 1996, publishing photographs, fetish fiction, reader letters, advertisements, and the occasional piece of editorial content. Rather than adopting an unsustainable focus on short-lived glossy print magazines that cater to a narrow segment of the market, the publishers of *Fetish Times* print in black-and-white and try to cast as wide of a sexual net as possible; in this sense, *Fetish Times* is the spiritual successor to pulpy magazines like

[13] *Belly Button Magazine*, June/July 1970.

Bizarre and *Exotique*. At first, the newspaper revolves around a core set of fairly common fetishes (rubber, bondage, transvestism, etc.) but it quickly expands to include material on amputee fetishism in 1981,[14] on adult babies in 1989,[15] and even more exotic interests as time wears on. New and unusual fetishes are quickly incorporated into the textual milieu of *Fetish Times*, either into the advertising section or into editorial content itself. In a 1977 issue, for example, the editors are bemused to discover the existence of adult babies and diaper lovers (ABDL): "BABY CLOTHES FOR ADULTS?! Disbelief invaded the *Fetish Times* office when a gentle lady named Mistress Florence called from Northern California [and] said she was in the business of selling—yes!—baby togs for big folks…"[16] By 1993, however, *Fetish Times* runs advertisements for *Diaper Pail Fraternity,*[17] a newsletter specifically for adult baby readers. As Angela Herd notes in her 1983 *Hustler* profile of adult babies, it is clear that specific ABDL print culture emerged through "*Fetish Times* … [and] the other tabloids."[18] In 1995, near the end of its circulation, *Fetish Times* publishes a full feature on an "adult baby bash" alongside "the photos to prove it!"[19] The newspaper then, functions as an important textual site for producing discourse on lesser-known fetishes, as well as for referring readers to publications with an even narrower focus on those fetishes. In other words, *Fetish Times* is essentially the nucleus of extra-academic textual material on sexual fetishism in the late twentieth century.

If *Fetish Times* is the nucleus, then it is orbited by a cloud of smaller, independent fetish newsletters that flourish in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, many of which eventually

[14] *Fetish Times* no. 91 (Van Nuys, CA), 1981.
[15] *Fetish Times* no. 187 (Van Nuys, CA), 1989, p. 3.
[16] "The Esoteric Shopper," *Fetish Times* vol. 6 (Van Nuys, CA), 1977, 10.
[17] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* 241 (Sausalito, CA), 1993.
[18] Angela Herd, "Big Babies: The Fetish of Infantilism," *Hustler* 10(6), 1983, 59.
[19] Emmanuel Goldstein, "Adult Baby Romp!" *Fetish Times* no. 264 (Van Nuys, CA), 1995, 19.

find their way into the holdings of the Kinsey Institute. In the 1970s, an organization called Ampix begins to produce pseudo-psychological and autobiographical literature about amputee fetishism to be distributed through the mail to a private list. Rubber and latex fetish publications also emerge—although these are primarily published in the U.K.—with the trademark Shiny branding (*Dressing for Pleasure, Leather Obsession, Shiny Housewives*) or in Canada by a latex company called Inn-Skin which publishes a hybrid newsletter and catalogue called *Erolastica* for four years in the mid-1970s. In the late 1970s, *Razor's Edge*, a newsletter on head-shaving fetishism, and *The SEBA Newsletter*, a baldness, tattoo, and piercing fetish newsletter both enjoy brief circulation. The aforementioned *Diaper Pail Fraternity* (later renamed the more gender-inclusive *Diaper Pail Friends* or *DPF*, for short) is an adult baby and diaper fetish newsletter that runs from 1980 until at least 1999, providing a textual space in which these phenomena first come to light. Two gay male underwear fetish newsletters crop up in the 1980s and 1990s: *Brief Notes* and *Brief Tales*. And a gay male foot fetish newsletter called *Foot Fraternity*, published by "a brotherhood of guys with a common interest factor" also emerges in the early 1990s.[20]

These smaller fetish newsletters run in a curious but non-coincidental parallel with the boom of feminist and queer newsletters and zinemaking practices in the late twentieth century. The first issue of lesbian erotica magazine *On Our Backs*, for example, emerges in 1984. Notable queer punk zine *Homocore* first enters print in 1988. From *Bear Magazine* to *Girlfriends* to *BLK* to Riot Grrrl zines,[21] the late twentieth century witnessed a comparable boom in gendered and sexual subcultures of all stripes.

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[20] *Foot Fraternity* vol. 45 (Cleveland, OH), January 1992.
[21] Lisa Darms, ed. *The Riot Grrrl Collection* (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).

Late twentieth century fetish newsletters share a common textual shape. Each issue is typically composed of some light editorial content, reader letters, short fiction, advertisements, as well as space for personal ads or meet-up groups. In the early history of most of these newsletters, reader-produced content tends to focus on the way in which their very textual existence has enabled the emergence of print fetish communities. One 1986 letter to the editor of *DPF*, for instance, reads as follows:

> I honestly thought I was the only one. A couple of days ago I went into an adult bookstore for the first time and came across a copy of "Fetish Times" with an article about adult babies. I also found your advertisement about an adult baby club. Needless to say I was thrilled to discover I was not the only one who enjoyed this particular fetish.[22]

And near the end of the tenure of one *In Step* editor in 1996, he reflects on the development of print culture for foot fetishism over the last six years:

> When I first started IN STEP back in 1990, there just wasn't anything on the subject of foot fetish in print. Since then, there has been an explosion of foot fetish material all over the internet and print. We used to think that we were the only ones in the world with a desire to kiss a woman's feet, then we find out that there are so many guys just like us.[23]

Much like the 1949 spanking scrapbooks discussed above, too, these fetish newsletters also tend to assemble references to their shared fetish object from other print sources, as well as from popular films and television shows. *DPF*, *Razor's Edge*, and *The SEBA Newsletter*, for example, all contain recurring "media roundup" features that highlight popular media that might be of interest to their readers. The editors of *Razor's Edge*, for example, are fascinated by Persis Khambatta's appearance as the bald Lieutenant Ilia in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, a "key role inked in very specifically for a sensuous

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[22] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* no. 30 (Sausalito, CA), October 15, 1986
[23] *In Step* vol. 6 no. 2 (Walnut, CA), February 1996.

female with a hairless head."[24] And readers of foot fetish magazine *In Step* who have a specific sub-fetish for trampling express gratitude for the seeming gift of Daryl Hannah's appearance in the television remake of *Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman*.[25] Because mainstream visual pornography at this time typically does not contain imagery that would be relevant to these smaller fetish publications, these "media roundups" take on added importance and are accordingly granted a privileged place in their pages.

But fetish newsletters more than make up for the deficit of visual pornographic material for rare sexual fetishes in the late twentieth century with a wealth of erotic literature offered for sale to their readers. Many fetish newsletters in the Kinsey Institute feature a catalogue of stories sorted by genre, sub-interest, and other factors, alongside brief plot summaries, from which readers can mail-order stories for a small fee on top of annual subscription fees. The publishers of these newsletters also generate revenue by peppering their pages with advertisements that allow readers to locate products specific to their interests: shoes for *In Step*, diapers for *DPF*, etc. The latex newsletter *Erolastica*, on the other hand, is published directly by a latex manufacturer Inn-Skin, who use their publication to promote their products, offering readers print space to "air [their] views" and submit their photos in return for consuming this promotion.[26] Fetish newsletters also serve as reference points for physical community building and erotic exchange and, as texts, they bear the marks of this process. Many newsletters housed in the Kinsey Institute contain a personal ad section that codes its ads so as to allow readers to anonymously express their interest in each other: "Goodlooking, 38, White & Love to

[24] *Razor's Edge* no. 9 (Palisades, NY), 1978, 21.
[25] *In Step* vol. 3 no. 9 (Walnut, CA), 1993.
[26] *Erolastica* 1, no. 1 (Waterloo, Ontario), December 1974, 3.

Wet My Briefs & Jeans."[27] *DPF*, on the other hand, goes so far as to pack a membership roster with subscribers' names and addresses inside most of its issues.

These newsletters only remain in place for a period of about twenty five years before economic and technological shifts render them irrelevant. The demise of *Fetish Times*, which was once the nucleus for print fetish culture, reveals these shifts in painful motion. In the 1990s, *Fetish Times* is clearly struggling to get by: the editors mainstream the content of the newspaper in an attempt to remain afloat but in a 1996 issue, the editors announce that the newspaper simply cannot survive in an economy dominated by glossy pornographic magazines like *Hustler* and a booming video industry:

> FETISH TIMES TO CLOSE! After 24 years of serving the public, our distributor informs us our next issue will be our last. Unless we get a reprieve (interested parties can write us to continue) issue 274 will be the last in a long line. We still believe we publish the best newspaper out there. But the incursion of 'hot' magazines like Hustler, High Society, etc. and the arrival of videos signaled the beginning of the end. Less book stores had space for low end publications and many opened video stores thus decreasing our exposure even more.[28]

Fetish Times closes its doors with these famous last-words: "Perhaps we will resurface on the inter-net [sic]."[29] Small fetish newsletters do not seem to have been immune from this economic pressure, either. As the 1990s wear on, the editor of *DPF* begins to phase out reader content in favor of more advertising. Most fetish newsletters taper off around the year 2000, at the same time that feminist and queer independent print publications begin to disappear as well. It is ironic, then, that the editors of fetish newsletters initially greet the advent of the Internet with breathless excitement at the way in which it will expedite the sorts of connections facilitated by their newsletters. One quote from a 1996 issue of *In Step*, for example, seems particularly understated in hindsight: "… for those of you who

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[27] *Brief Notes*, Windy Hill Publications (Dallas, TX), May 1983.
[28] *Fetish Times* no. 273 (Van Nuys, CA), 1996.
[29] Ibid.

haven't yet gotten on the Internet, you're really missing something."[30] In that same year, the editor of *DPF* makes this prescient announcement: "We're happy to announce that the INTERNET and cyberspace has come to DPF. I'm sure you can picture all these big babies and diaper lovers as they sit in front of their computers while they surf the Net."[31] But this excitement wanes as the Internet proceeds to make their publications irrelevant, allowing fetishists to instantaneously connect with each other and locate fetish material on their computers instead of paying their dues.

The work of these newsletters does not end in the late 1990s and early 2000s so much as it changes locations. The underlying structure of fetish newsletters is preserved virtually intact on Internet fetish forums. The popular adult baby and diaper fetish site DailyDiapers.com, for example, is almost identical in structure to old *DPF* newsletters. *DPF* offers mail-order stories; DailyDiapers.com has a free story section. Member profiles on DailyDiapers.com fulfill the same function as *DPF*'s membership roster and the message boards on DailyDiapers.com allow members to talk about their fetish with each other more quickly than they could through a membership roster or through the letters sections of *DPF*. Both *DPF* and DailyDiapers.com partner with advertisers to sell pertinent adult baby accoutrement: diapers, baby clothes, pacifiers. DailyDiapers.com sub-forums like "Diapers in the News" are the direct descendants of the media roundup sections in fetish newsletters. The through-lines from print to Internet are strikingly clear.

But these through-lines have not necessarily been remembered in contemporary online discourse on sexual fetishism. In earlier postings on Internet forums, however, I can trace this hurried transition from print to Internet. In one archived 2003 conversation

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[30] *In Step* vol. 3 no. 2 (Walnut, CA), 1996, 2.
[31] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* no. 86 (Sausalito, CA), February 15, 1996, 21.

on a foot fetish forum,[32] for example, older users reminisce about *In Step* magazine as if it were already a relic from a bygone time even though it had only been out of print for two years. One user, referring to his collection of *In Step* issues asks, "Does anyone else remember these and is the magazine still being published?" To which another replies:

> I use [sic] to subscribe to "In Step" magazine and I use [sic] to buy all those underground newspapers like "Fetish Times" and "Dominant Mystique" as well as other domination magazines. I was lucky to find a picture or two of trampling in some of them. I spent a small fortune on these things as many of you probably have… Trying to find material was a full-time job back then. The internet was the death knell for most of these publications. They were expensive and hard to find. The younger folks need to know that fetish material was not readily available to us older folks so learn to keep things in perspective when you find yourself whining about content. Todays [sic] internet is a bargain when one considers the quantity and quality of fetish material that was unimaginable only a decade ago.

By reading fetish newsletters and Internet fetish forums within the same chapter, I want to solidify the links between them in terms of content and purpose. But first, I want to explore the rich affective content of these texts in conversation with Silvan Tomkins.

Affect in Fetish Newsletters

In this section, I will read an array of six late twentieth-century fetish newsletters housed in the Kinsey Institute through the lens of the affective theory of sexuality drafted in Chapter One. I engage primarily with these newsletters here—as I did in the history in the previous section—as textual sites in which the affective qualities of sexual fetishism surface both in reader descriptions of various fetishes and in the format of the newsletters themselves which—much like the affect of interest—surround their objects from several possible vantage points. While I can make no direct claims with biological authority as to how particular fetishes feel for individual fetishists, then, I do want to note the ways in

[32] "In Step Magazine," last modified September 19, 2003, http://web.archive.org/web/20140403055111/http://mistressdestiny.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-15688.html.

which the texts of these fetish newsletters coincide with the biological affective responses that Tomkins describes. While these newsletters cannot definitively answer the question "How does a fetish feel?" for any individual they can at least prove to be rich textual sites in which answers to that question are freely posed and frequently hazarded.

My overall purpose in reading these newsletters is twofold: First, I will offer evidence that affective language is used to describe fetishes across almost every newsletter in the Kinsey Institute. And second, where possible, I want to continue to articulate, demonstrate, and expand on the initial principles of an affective theory of sexuality developed in the previous chapter, especially the idea that affects can take other affects as their objects. In the following section, I will turn to a more granular focus on the affective curves of a specific sexual fetish but, in this section, I want to provide a broader overview of the circulation of affective language across an array of newsletters.

I will draw from six different fetish organizations and newsletters in this section, which I will briefly re-introduce here: Ampix*, Brief Notes, Diaper Pail Fraternity* (*DPF*), *Erolastica*, *Foot Fraternity*, and *In Step*. Ampix, as Anne A. Lawrence notes, is "a company that specialized in selling stories and photographs of amputees to interested persons," starting in the mid-1970s.[33] While not properly a newsletter, Ampix managed a mailing list with over 300 subscribers, distributing mail-order material on amputee fetishism across the country. *Brief Notes* is an underwear fetish newsletter with a primarily gay male readership that circulates in the 1980s. *DPF* is a newsletter for adult babies and diaper lovers (ABDL) first published in Sausalito, California in 1980—many

[33] Anne A. Lawrence, "Clinical and Theoretical Parallels between Desire for Limb Amputation and Gender Identity Disorder," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 35 (2006): 264.

older members of ABDL Internet fetish forums are former *DPF* subscribers who remember it is an important but controversial pillar of early discourse on their fetish.[34]

Erolastica is a newsletter published by Canadian rubber and latex manufacturer Inn-Skin, beginning in December 1974.[35] This newsletter is particularly short-lived: in 1976, the manufacturer suffers a devastating robbery[36] and in 1978, both manufacturer and newsletter move to Brattleboro, Vermont where publication ceases altogether after a short time.[37]*Foot Fraternity* is a gay male foot fetish newsletter founded by Cleveland, Ohio resident Doug Gaines in 1982, reaching its height of circulation in the 1990s. According to *The Los Angeles Times*, the subscriber base of the newsletter passed the 4,000 member mark by 1996.[38] The newsletter primarily highlights acts of gay male foot kissing, foot domination, and foot smelling, with a standard catalog of stories included for readers to acquire more material. And lastly, *In Step* Magazine, published in Walnut, California, functioned as the premier foot fetish newsletter for heterosexual men in the 1990s. The Kinsey Institute's collections include dozens of issues of *In Step*, dating from 1992 to 2000 when the publishers briefly attempted to move to the web.[39] Across this time, *In Step* primarily catered to straight men with a variety of foot-related interests including tickling, squishing, and trampling.

Prevalence of Affective Language

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[34] "History of AB/DLs or infantilism," last modified February 21, 2009, https://www.adisc.org/forum/archive/index.php/t-8656.html.
[35] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 1 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1974.
[36] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 7 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1976.
[37] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 8 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1978.
[38] Kathleen Kelleher, "Head Over Heels in Love," *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1996, accessed October 15, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1996-09-30/news/ls-49077_1_high-heels.
[39] "In Step: Foot Fetish at its Best," accessed October 15, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/19991012110734/http://instepmag.com/.

Affective language—particularly the language of "interest"—is prevalent across these late twentieth-century newsletters, even if it only seems to be used casually. As I will argue later in this section, the colloquial quality of affective language may help to obscure the primacy of affect for human sexuality. In one anonymous Ampix mailing, for example, the author uses this markedly affective language to describe his feelings toward amputees:

> The fetishist probably knows that he has an interest in amputees which is greater than simple childhood curiosity. If he was like the writer, he probably discussed it with no one, knowing that it would bring disapproval. But with the onset of puberty and the realization that his interest had a sexual connotation, he was absolutely astounded. Most likely, he felt ashamed, perhaps guilty, and almost certainly had some fear about his own mental health.[40]

In a few short sentences, the author manages to mention three of Tomkins' primary affects: interest, shame, fear. Later, too, he argues that the amputee fetishist "enjoyes [sic] his hobby," a casual reference to an affect that Tomkins identifies as being vital to human sexuality alongside the primary affect of excitement. When read outside of a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality, this affective language might barely register but, when juxtaposed with Tomkins' idea that sexuality is primarily affective, the language could take on an added significance.

In *Brief Notes*, the recurring personal ads section—playfully entitled "Brief Encounters"—also contains subtly affective language. Below, for example, are excerpts of four personal ads from a single issue:

> INTO GUYS IN ALL KINDS OF BRIEFS, COMPETITION SWIMWEAR, ATHLETIC GEAR, OR WILL TRY OTHER STUFF
>
> GOODLOOKING, 38, WHITE, & LOVE TO WET MY BRIEFS & JEANS.

[40] "Amputee Fetishism: A Personal View," (Lawndale, CA: Ampix, 1975), 11.

> I AM INTO MEN WHO ARE INTO WHITE COTTON BRIEFS, ESPECIALLY WORN ONES.
>
> I AM TURNED ON BY THE FANTASTIC SIGHT, FEEL, SMELL AND TASTE OF WELL-WORN, RIPE BRIEFS AND JOCKS.[41]

While Tomkins' technical language is not as instantly recognizable in these ads, I can note nonetheless that the term "into" which appears frequently in the above personals—and in many conversations that are commonly coded as sexual—is defined by the OED in its colloquial usage as meaning "interested or involved in."[42] Even in this casual, telegraphic speech, it is still possible to find traces of affective language in the most cursory sections of fetish newsletters.

The pages of *DPF* are likewise peppered with affective vocabulary. In one 1984 letter from Boise, Idaho, a reader named Richie reflects on his experience at "Baby Week," the annual *DPF* reader meet-up: "Dear Tommy and Marky, Do you know what I found in San Francisco? I found people who had the very same fears, thoughts and feelings that I do! I made many new friends. I didn't have to feel ashamed of wearing my diapers because everyone else was in diapers too."[43] I will return to the role of shame in adult baby play and diaper fetishism below but, for now, it is worth noting that ABDL practices are defined here by a similarity of "feelings." Even *DPF* readers who mirror the etiological focus of clinical discourse on sexual fetishism by recalling a first experiences with diapers—a common theme of reader letters in many fetish newsletters—use affective language to do so. One reader, for example, writes about "being particularly

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[41] *Brief Notes*, Windy Hill Publications (Dallas, TX), May 1983.
[42] "into, prep. and adj.". OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/98530 (accessed November 15, 2014).
[43] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* no. 17 (Sausalito, CA), August 15, 1984.

interested in the Pampers vs. cloth commercial in the 70s,"[44] another reader speculates that playing with rubber pants as a child "played a critical part in developing [his] interests,"[45] and yet another reader remembers having "always been interested in diapers."[46] Another man writes in to inform the editor-in-chief, Tommy, that he has used the Internet to find "12 other people with my same interests."[47]

However brief its shelf life, *Erolastica* also provides an example of the prevalence of affective language in fetish texts. Several letters from *Erolastica* readers deploy the same sort of affective language seen above. J.C. from Alexandria, Virginia, for instance, cites both enjoyment and interest:

> I had enjoyed wearing latex for several years, before I married. But when I married I didn't tell my new bride about my fondness for rubber. Finally after several years she became curious about my locked bags and other mysterious activities. So I told her all about my interests, and to my surprise she said that she would like to try wearing latex too.[48]

Another reader notes that he found Inn-Skin and *Erolastica* through *Penthouse* and assumed that "there must be others of this interest, especially since *Penthouse* has devoted a fair amount of space to articles involving amputees … and I'm sure they wouldn't waste print on something no one shows an interest in."[49] And B.R. from Ohio recalls that "the 1960s were wonderful years for those of us interested in exotic-erotic wear."[50] Again, I can observe the same unmarked use of terms like "interest" appearing with such casual frequency that we might be tempted to ignore them altogether.

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[44] *Diaper Pail Friends* no. 86 (Mill Valley, CA), February 15, 1996, 20.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] *Diaper Pail Friends* no. 19 (Mill Valley, CA), February 1, 1985.
[48] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 2 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1975, 7.
[49] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 3 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1975, 6.
[50] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 2 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1975, 6.

The language of enjoyment also makes a frequent appearance in *Erolastica* reader letters. J.E. from Minnesota writes that he is "certain your magazine will be of help and enjoyment to a great many."[51]Another reader, recalling the fact that he used to sleep with a rubber sheet, writes that he "remember[s] vividly the enjoyment of that gentle, soft, and wet caress of a pink or white piece of material that smelled so good, so comforting," an enjoyment that apparently brings him so close to the rubber sheet that he can almost be read as describing enjoyment as a property of the rubber sheet itself.[52]

Affective language also appears in the *Foot Fraternity* newsletter. In 1992, just as the newsletter is reaching its peak, Gaines writes the following letter of gratitude to his readers:

> Thank you all for making us the largest foot/footgear group of our kind in the world! We are not only a source to meet others, but an affirmation group. You are not alone with your feelings and there is always someone to talk to if you feel the need. We are a brotherhood of guys who have a common interest factor. This gives us a special bond.[53]

Again, one might rightly observe that this phrase—"common interest factor"— has probably not been chosen deliberately by Gaines in order to make a commentary about the affective quality of fetishism but, when considered in conjunction with its appearance across newsletters, an overall picture of its potential affective significance is beginning to emerge.

To cap off this consideration of the prevalence of affective language in fetish newsletters, consider this excerpt from a 1994 issue of *In Step* in which the editor reacts with surprise to the results of a survey of the idiosyncratic interests of his readers:

When I first started IN STEP, I figured that the interests in women's feet were

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[51] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 8 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1978, 7.
[52] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 4 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1975, 12.
[53] *Foot Fraternity* vol. 45 (Cleveland, OH), January 1992.

> pretty much the same as what I personally liked. I have to admit that I wasn't then aware of the diverse variations that are involved in the fetish. All in all, I think you would all have to agree, that there is not another publication that covers as much foot fetish material or interests as IN STEP. So when you write suggesting that we eliminate a certain interest, and you still see it appearing, just keep in mind that someone or several someones out there have this interest, and it is just as important to them as yours is to you. In all fairness to everyone, we will continue to provide a publication that caters to as many interests as we are able to obtain material on, and will always strive to expand on the interests that I know from your responses and letters are the most popular.[54]

As more and more newsletters repeat this pattern of participating in a pervasive language of "interest"—the editor above uses the term five times in as many sentences—one might begin to wonder whether its frequent appearance can be dismissed as a euphemism or whether the affective lens of "interest" might tell us more—and, frankly, more interesting—things about human sexuality than the conceptual lens of a sexual instinct.

One obstacle facing an affective reading of fetish literature, then, is the way in which our affective vocabulary has been rendered banal or even invisible through colloquial usage. Coincidentally and unfortunately, this problem is especially acute in the case of "interest," the primary affect that Tomkins identifies as being at the center of human sexuality. As Sianne Ngai notes, "interesting" is a "notoriously pervasive" aesthetic category in both scholarly and colloquial conversation[55] and, as such, saying that we are "interested" in something often acts as an empty judgment, a placeholder—a "sticky note" as Ngai puts it—or a forestalling of judgment.[56] The term "interest" has been so thoroughly stripped of its affective force through overuse that, as a result, when we hear the phrase "interest in amputees," one might either not notice the term or read it as placeholder for a less polite term. In this respect, then, C.C. Gosselin can almost

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[54] *In Step* vol. 4 no. 7 (Walnut, CA), July 1994.
[55] Sianne Ngai, "Our Aesthetic Categories," *PMLA* 125 (2010): 952.
[56] Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 134.

certainly be forgiven—or at least understood—for his insistence on recoding his subjects' stated "interest" in rubber as sexual.

But it may not be a coincidence that the affect that Tomkins identifies as being primary to human sexuality—interest or excitement—appears most frequently across fetish newsletters whereas the chief secondary affect of human sexuality—enjoyment—appears less frequently but still with regularity. Indeed, one might wonder how much the affective details of sexuality have been elided by the banalization and generalization of affective language. In order to suggest that the prevalence of affective language observed in this sub-section is not coincidental—that although it may not be deliberate, it may be revealing nonetheless—I will move next to demonstrate that the affect of interest does seem to manifest itself in and through these fetish newsletters in less superficial ways.

Interest in Fetish Newsletters

In Chapter One, I observed that interest wraps around an object and that the interested person "varies his perspectives, perceptual and conceptual" by "look[ing] at the object now from one angle now from one angle, now from another."[57] If interest is the affect at the center of human sexuality, then we should expect, say, an amputee fetishist to demonstrate this multi-perspectival stance toward his object, rather than simply accepting the eroticism of amputation as self-evident. This is indeed the case across twentieth-century fetish newsletters. In one Ampix mailing, "The Amputee Devotee," the anonymous author provides five unique reasons to describe why amputation is so "appealing to [the fetishist] and what feelings or emotional upsets they create":[58]

[57] Tomkins, *Affect*, 191.
[58] "The Amputee Devotee," (Lawndale, CA), Mar. 1, 1977, 1.

A. Amputation is visible and predominant. Further, it is immediately apparent that it is a permanent condition with no doubt left remaining that it is irreversible.
B. Amputation is eye-catching due to the basic four-limbed pattern of human existance [sic].
C. Amputation produces unique motion forms, contours, outlines, and obvious deficiencies, any or all of which are considered by the devotee as rhythmic, shapely, attractive, and totally appealing.
D. Amputation causes onlookers to take special notice, due to characteristic deviation from the "norm."
E. Amputation produces an outward example of one's basic desire to succeed and pursue normal activities despite obvious difficulties.[59]

In this passage, the anonymous amputee fetishist produces a perfect textual example of the multi-faceted relationship to an object that characterizes the affect of interest. In Chapter One, I noted that Tomkins believes that it is the complexity and "novelty of the sexual object"[60] that demands our attention and, in this author's words, amputation does seem to be a sufficiently complex and novel object—at a glance, I can note the number of adjectives used by the author that suggest novelty: "unique," "special," "eye-catching." Next, I can observe the complexity of the relationship to the concept of amputation described here: he likes the fact that it is "irreversible," that it is asymmetrical, that it is aesthetically unique, that it is atypical, and that it requires extra effort on behalf of the amputee. This passage perfectly captures the excited, childlike shifting of perspectives that is interest's trademark gesture.

Consider, too, the above-quoted personal ads in *Brief Notes*. Even though all four of these ads appear in an underwear fetish magazine, each man's particular interests under that banner are idiosyncratic: one prefers swimwear, the other likes wet briefs and jeans, one insists on white cotton briefs, another focuses on the sensations of interacting with briefs and jockstraps after they have been worn for an extended period of time. All

[59] Ibid., 2.
[60] Tomkins, *Affect*, 31.

of them interact in a shared textual space but each brings his own unique interests to that space. To Tomkins' initial insight that interest is motivated by the complexity and novelty of its objects, then, we can add the further insight that these newsletters themselves adopt a multi-perspectival approach to their shared objects on a textual level. If interest can "match" itself to its object and if it is "capable of sufficiently graded, flexible innervation,"[61] then fetish newsletters themselves behave much like the affect of interest, examining a shared fetish object from every possible perspective.

This same dynamic can be found in the pages of *DPF*, where readers describe virtually all aspects of the experience of wearing and using diapers and other baby paraphernalia. Each entry in the newsletter's membership roster is accompanied by a sequence of letters drawn from "A" to "R" that indicate which aspects of the fetish each member is interested in: A is for Diapers, B is for Plastic Pants, C is for Baby Clothes, D is for Wetting, E is for Cross Dressing, etc.[62] The story catalog in *DPF* also employs this system with a range of topics from "A" to "Z," covering everything from enemas, spanking, bondage, crying, shaving, etc. As the editor writes of his newsletter's subscribers in 1991, "their interests are varied, but [they are] primarily in diapers, plastic or rubber pants, wet pants, bedwetting, Infantilism, little boy and little girl fantasies, humiliation, spanking , discipline, domination, enemas, W/S, cross-dressing, S/M and catheters."[63] As a collectively-produced text, then, *DPF*, much like *Brief Tales*, wraps around every possible experience involving diapers, literally listing them from A to Z.

In Step, too, reveals the way in which fetish newsletters behave much like interest itself, surrounding a shared object and exploring every possible aspect thereof. In 1992,

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[61] Tomkins, *Affect*, 118.
[62] *Diaper Pail Friends* no. 14 (Mill Valley, CA), January 1984.
[63] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* (Sausalito, CA), April 1992, 1.

the aforementioned survey asks readers to indicate what they are interested in and what they would like to see more of, including: bare feet, soles, toes, shoes, nylons, feet being kisses, feet of different sizes, etc.[64] The results, published two years later, are staggering in their level of detail: some men prefer dirty soles, some prefer wrinkled soles, some prefer painted nails, some prefer long nails, some prefer spike heels, others prefer sandals or open-toed shoes, some prefer seamed nylons, some prefer fishnets.[65] With this added information in mind, then, the sheer rate at which the term "interest" appears across these newsletters is shored up both by descriptions of interest affixing itself to an object and by the newsletters themselves which model interest by surrounding fetish objects and exploring them in their rich complexity.

Negative Affects and Sexuality

In the previous chapter, I noted that affects can affix themselves to other affects, even affects which seem to be inherently negative. As Tomkins notes, affects "may also be invested in other affects, combine with other affects, intensify or modulate them, and suppress or reduce them."[66] What this means is that excitement—sexual excitement included—can be affixed to affects which might seem to be innately punishing at first. I further noted that because the positive affects of interest and enjoyment are the primary and defining affects of human sexuality, negative affects would need to function as objects of those positive affects in order to be successfully eroticized. If this is the case, we should expect to find discourse in these newsletters that describes the investment of

[64] *In Step* vol. 2 no. 6 (Walnut, CA), 1992.
[65] *In Step* vol. 4 no. 6 (Walnut, CA), 1994, 3.
[66] Tomkins, *Affect*, 76.

positive affect *in* negative affect—a seemingly paradoxical possibility that nonetheless seems uniquely generative in the case of sexual fetishism.

Indeed, many fetish objects are objects that would typically be greeted with disgust or dissmell, a circumstance that might make some fetishes seem strange and undesirable. Dissmell is Tomkins' neologism for "bad smell responses"[67] and it operates in parallel with disgust, which I will consider in even more detail below. The dissmell response, like disgust, is a "distancing response" that "require[s] no learning"; it seeks to "draw the head and the body away from the bad smelling object."[68] But the readers of *In Step* produce descriptions of foot fetishism in which interest in feet runs perpendicular to the dissmell with which most would respond to a fragrant foot: "… you may think that your feet smell bad … to a man, it is the sweetest purest perfume which turns him into putty."[69] In this case, the investment of positive affect in the odor of feet is described as being so thorough that it does not register as dissmelling at all but rather as "perfume."

But although this description in *In Step* seems to present a situation in which positive affect has completely attenuated the possibility of a negative response, these newsletters also contain descriptions of cases in which negative affect itself becomes a source of excitation. One erotic story in *Erolastica*—"The Christmas Package" by D.D. Walsh—includes a scene in which the protagonist touches latex for the first time:

> The sensation was one like he had never before experienced. There was a certain strangeness about it, almost a repulsion, but he felt curiously drawn to the small squares of shiny black latex. He held them to his face, his lips, his tongue. Rubbed it against his cheeks as he felt the lump of soft, massy flesh grow hard and erect in his pants. He knew at that moment he would relieve the dark and growing pressure that was building within.[70]

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[67] Ibid., 629.
[68] Ibid., 629.
[69] *In Step* vol. 2 no. 7 (Walnut, CA), February 1993, 3.
[70] *Erolastica* vol. 1 no. 1 (Waterloo, Ontario), 1974, 18.

This character's engagement with latex above bears strong similarities to Tomkins' brief discussion of the sexualization of the affect of disgust in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*. Tomkins defines disgust as a "response [that] intends to maximize the distance between the face and the object which disgusts the self. It is a literal pulling away from the object."[71] While disgust generally applies to objects that have been ingested and manifests itself in a sneer or an upward turn of the lip, it has become generalized such that it can take on any unpleasant object that an individual interacts with whether through sight, touch, or thought.[72] At first blush, the negative affect of disgust might seem to be directly antithetical to human sexuality which, as I have noted, is primarily defined by positive affect. And indeed, the character in Walsh's story initially feels "repulsion"—a word that aligns with Tomkins' notion of disgust as a "pulling away" in its OED definition of "the action of forcing a person or thing back or away"[73]—upon contact with the unnervingly smooth texture of latex. How can interest, which pulls a person closer to an object, compete with disgust, which pushes him or her away from an object? In other words, how can someone be turned on by something *disgusting*?

Tomkins' description of the activators of disgust, however, makes it clear that disgust is an affect that can bear a much more complex relationship with an object than merely pushing it away. He notes that the activation of disgust can "also be based on an underlying wish to incorporate the object or come closer to it" and, as such, "disgust may [also] be aroused by a very attractive sex object, if there is both a strong wish for and fear

[71] Tomkins, *Affect*, 356.
[72] Ibid., 357.
[73] "repulsion, n.". OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/163203 (accessed November 29, 2014).

of sexual contact."[74] And, as I have noted above, what constitutes a "very attractive sex object" will vary by individual as the affect of excitement can affix itself to "anything which is exciting to the person who is experiencing it."[75] This quality of disgust, too, is captured perfectly by Walsh's description of his character's eroticized ambivalence toward latex, at once feeling a "repulsion" while also being "curiously drawn to it"—literally meaning that he is pulled in two directions at once. Disgust, then, can exist at the core of a sexual interest without contradicting it; in fact, the dynamic of being repelled by one facet of an object that is also "shiny" and interesting can itself become an object of sexual interest. As the adapted adage goes: one man's affective trash is another man's affective treasure. While latex is a relatively mild example of an object that can provoke a reaction of disgust—other fetishes like foot fetishism (considered above) and erotic vomiting (considered below) involve objects that are more widely acknowledged to be disgusting. It is worth noting here that a fetishistic form of interest may not take on a disgusting object in spite of disgust but rather *because* of it.

But of all the negative affects, it is shame that is most amenable to becoming the object of markedly sexual excitement and enjoyment. Shame is most prone to be eroticized because it is still activated by a continued "investment of positive affect"[76] even if it ultimately registers as a negative affect overall. As such, one might expect shame to be more sexually generative, so to speak, than the affect of disgust and Tomkins himself seems to confirm this suspicion in one of his later volumes:

> Independent of the quantity of affect (holding density constant) shame is the least malignant, distress next, disgust next, and dissmell, rage, and terror most malignant and punishing. Because shame is evoked by and constitutes a partial

[74] Tomkins, *Affect*, 357.
[75] Ibid., 31.
[76] Ibid., 362.

> interruption and reduction of positive affect, it readily lends itself to scripted reparative responses which return the scene to its positive quality.[77]

Indeed, the social and sexual possibilities of shame have been the most common mode of engagement with Tomkins' work within queer studies. For my purposes here, however, I want to note both that shame is a recurring theme in fetish newsletters and that it must become the object of positive affect in order to be experienced as sexual.

To demonstrate the dynamic of sexual shame, I want to focus on an exchange between Tommy, the editor of *DPF*, and an anonymous reader in which the importance of shame and humiliation to ABDL interests becomes a particularly insightful point of contention. In 1991, Tommy rebrands *DPF* as "The Happiness Club," writing:

> We like to think of DPF as the 'Happiness Club' because we offer happiness in so many ways. Sometimes it's just knowing that you're not the only one in the world with similar desires and feelings. Or it could be corresponding with or meeting other people to share your feelings and experiences.[78]

Happiness is not an affect but rather an emotion which, as Donald L. Nathanson of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute notes in his prologue to *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, "describes the combination of whatever affect has just been triggered as it is coassembled with our memory of previous experiences of that affect."[79] Happiness, in other words, is a unifying rubric through which we make sense of our sum experiences of positive affect. Tommy's description of the importance of "happiness" to *DPF* aligns with this concept of coassembly, hence the emphasis on compounding "experiences" that can be reflected in and shared through the newsletter. Simply put: positive affect plus diapers over time equals happiness.

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[77] Ibid., 741.
[78] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* (Sausalito, CA), April 1992, 1.
[79] Donald L. Nathanson, "Prologue: Affect, Imagery, Consciousness" in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, ed. Bertram P. Karon (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008), xiv.

Tommy's descriptions of diaper fetishism do indeed emphasize experiences of positive affect and diaper wearing. Five years prior to the "Happiness Club" rebranding, Tommy had announced the start of a "New Directions" initiative, which barely receives any mention in subsequent newsletters:

> The NEW DIRECTIONS that I am talking about are going to attack all three of these problems [loneliness, guilt/shame, relationships]. As DPF members, you are about to participate in an effort to greatly reduce these blocks to happiness. We think that infantilism can become a much more acceptable variant psychosexual fetish. We think that these new directions can blast away the pangs of guilt or shame.[80]

In Tommy's descriptions of *DPF*, the newsletter is targeted at the reduction of "shame" which is figured here as a "block" to positive affect and, in this respect, Tommy's expressed understanding of shame aligns with Silvan Tomkins' own understanding of shame. Tomkins defines shame as an affective response that seeks to reduce eye contact and is activated by "an incomplete reduction of a positive affect,"[81] whether that affect is "excitement or joy."[82] Shame is a relatively common affect because, as humans strive to "maximize positive affect,"[83] under the first General Image, it is almost inevitable that we encounter one of the "innumerable ways in which excitement and enjoyment may be partially blocked and reduced and thereby activate shame."[84] In Tomkins' words, affects are blocked by "barriers" to positive affect which "reduce [said] positive affect sufficiently to activate shame, but not so completely that the original object is renounced."[85] In other words, shame is the affect that emerges when positive affect persists beyond an impediment to that positive affect. As Tomkins puts it: "In the

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[80] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* no. 29 (Sausalito, CA), August 15, 1986.
[81] Tomkins, *Affect*, 118.
[82] Ibid., 159.
[83] Ibid., 180.
[84] Ibid., 387.
[85] Ibid., 388.

response of shame … the self remains somewhat committed to the investment of positive affect."[86] Or, alternately: "'I want, but—' is one essential condition for the activation of shame."[87]

Under this definition, the shame Tommy describes seems to correspond primarily to the social stigmatization of ABDL or, as he puts it, the fact that it has not yet become an "acceptable variant psychosexual fetish." In Tomkinsian vocabulary, then, the "New Directions Initiative" marks an interest in or enjoyment of diapers that is blocked by the barrier of social stigma but not so severely as to cause Tommy and other *DPF* readers to "renounce" diaper wearing altogether. But not every DPF reader agrees with the emphasis on positive affect found in Tommy's editorial descriptions. Shortly after the "Happiness Club" rebranding, Tommy receives a reader letter that prompts the following lengthy response:

> I was very surprised to receive a letter a few months ago from a member who was upset because he didn't think we should call ourselves 'The Happiness Club'. He felt that because he and his friends used diapers mainly for punishment and humiliation and because they did not consider themselves 'happy' little babies, DPF was not a 'Happiness Club' for them.
>
> I wrote back to say that I thought he misunderstood the meaning of the term 'happiness' as used within DPF. I explained that our 'happiness' has nothing to do with being happy because you are a baby, or being 'happy' because someone diapers you. The true meaning of 'happiness' in DPF is being able to achieve WHATEVER makes you happy, whether that means being a baby, wetting you [sic] pants in public, being humiliated and forced into diapers, sucking cocks, fucking cunts, being masturbated, licking cum, sucking big boobs, being fist fucked, or whatever else turns you on as long as it contains diapers in some form or another.[88]

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[86] Ibid., 362.
[87] Ibid., 388.
[88] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* no. 58 (Sausalito, CA), June 15, 1991, 1.

Tommy's interlocutor here notes that "humiliation"—which Tomkins places on the same affective continuum as shame[89]—can also be central to diaper fetishism. This anonymous correspondent's emphasis on shame is corroborated by several *DPF* readers who explore the centrality of shame, embarrassment, and humiliation to their erotic life including, ironically enough, Tommy himself who wrote in 1988 about feeling "so embarrassed and very much like a bad boy" when his partner Marky discovered that he had "overflowed [his] diaper."[90] As Tommy demonstrates so adeptly here, experiences of feeling ashamed for having wet one's diaper are central to the fantasies of ABDLs expressed in *DPF*.

But this kind of eroticized shame is different from the shame found in descriptions of the New Directions initiative and the Happiness Club rebranding. In the former case, the affects of excitement and/or enjoyment seem to affix themselves to the shame of wearing diapers in accordance with Tomkins' observation that affects "may also be invested in other affects [and] combine with other affects."[91] On this view, the act of being diapered or using a diaper is still described as shaming but that shame itself is presented as interesting or enjoyable, compounding the interest or enjoyment of wearing the diaper. This presents a curve of positive affects made possible by the combinatorial qualities of affect: wearing diapers feels good, a social barrier interrupts that affect, activating shame, which, in turn, feels good. The defining positive affects of human sexuality can affix themselves to other affects, even negative ones but, no matter how this chain of affects is constructed, positive affect will always finish the curve.

And in this sense, Tommy's rejoinder vis-à-vis the use of the term "happiness" is especially revealing. Happiness, as articulated in the Happiness Club rebranding, seems

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[89] Tomkins, *Affect*, 387.
[90] *Diaper Pail Fraternity* no. 38 (Sausalito, CA), February 15, 1988.
[91] Tomkins, *Affect*, 76.

to be positioned against a broader, societal shaming, not the individual experiences of shame that reside at the center of the descriptions of diaper fetishism described on *DPF*. Although the reader who takes issue with the Happiness Club does so because he reportedly seeks "humiliation," I can observe, following Tomkins, that he may only seek that humiliation because he is interested in it and/or enjoys it. In short, humiliation must be experienced as positive; if it were total, the principle behind the second General Image—"negative affect should be minimized"[92]—would motivate a complete discontinuation of the behavior. Negative affects can and do seem to play an important role in human sexuality—and perhaps especially fetishistic sexuality—but these negative affects must become objects of positive affect in order to be felt as sexual. As I noted it in Chapter One, positive affect is the bottom line of human sexuality.

Blurring the Borders of Sexuality

In the preceding sub-sections, I have moved through material from six fetish newsletters with the dual intent of demonstrating the pervasiveness of affective vocabulary within their pages while also offering some further notes toward the construction of an affective theory of sexuality. With regards to the first purpose, I can observe that across virtually all fetish newsletters, the term "interest," which Tomkins identifies as the affective response at the center of sexuality, appears with surprising regularity even given its pervasiveness as an "aesthetic category."[93] With regards to the second purpose, I can add the following notes and pieces of evidence to the principles of an affective theory of sexuality that we drafted in the previous chapter: First, interest does indeed behave as an idiosyncratic, multi-faceted lens through which to view and surround an object. Second,

[92] Ibid., 180.
[93] Ngai, "Aesthetic Categories," 952.

fetishes can "be emitted to" any object,[94] even objects that might seem repulsive or disgusting. And third, the fact that affects can affix themselves to other affects is crucial for understanding fetishes that involve negative affects like shame or disgust.

Before reading the more specific affective curves of a single fetish in the next section, I want to return to the Ampix quote introduced at the start of this chapter by way of conclusion. In that Ampix mailing, the anonymous author writes that "[t]he fetishist probably knows that he has an interest in amputees which is greater than simple childhood curiosity," adding that he later realizes "that his interest had a sexual connotation." He then introduces the following evocative notion: "… sex is in the same bag with his interest in the handicapped person."[95] I want to mark here that he does not say that his "interest" becomes sexual but rather that it takes on a "sexual connotation," a phrasing that emphasizes affect's continuing role at the core of a fetishistic interest in amputation, even if we understand that interest to be sexual. I also want to note that he does not say that the fetishist is both interested in *and* aroused by the amputee; rather, he says that "interest" and "sex" are in the "same bag," a claim that closely mirrors the way in which an affective theory of sexuality would understand sexuality and interest to be consubstantial. Indeed, if it has seemed difficult to maintain a grasp on a distinct concept of sexuality throughout these readings of fetish newsletters, it is because an affective theory of sexuality—as noted in Chapter One—does not contain strong tools for setting sexuality apart as a separate and distinct realm of human behavior. I will return to the implications of this idea in more detail in Chapter Three and the Coda.

Affect on SneezeFetishForum.Org

[94] Tomkins, *Affect*, 31.
[95] "The Amputee Devotee," (Lawndale, CA), Mar. 1, 1977, 15.

In this section, I read postings on the Internet forum SneezeFetishForum.org (SFF) for their affective resonance. In contrast to the texts I read in the previous section, the textual life of sneezing fetishism seems to be coextensive with the advent of the Internet, a circumstance that is likely a result of its rarity relative to the fetishes that are given the newsletter treatment in the 1970s and 1980s. As one sneezing fetish site webmaster writes: "Interest in sneezing showed itself on the web in 1995 in the form of messages on newsgroup[s] for fetishes in general."[96] This webmaster estimates that there were about 400 active sneezing fetishists online in 1999. That number has since grown to a membership of several thousand on SFF. Even still, sneezing fetishism is a slim fraction of contemporary Internet fetish discourse. Consider that a Google search for "sneezing fetish" returns under 200,000 results whereas a search for "foot fetish" returns nearly 20 million results.

I will approach this Internet fetish forum in the same way that I approached the archival materials in the previous sections: as a text, first and foremost. This approach is justified by the above-noted similarity of fetish forums to the newsletters found in the archives at the Kinsey Institute in terms of structure and focus. Although "lurking," or non-participant online observation, is generally seen as an ethically suspect methodology in many forms of real-time online ethnography,[97] my project is not ethnographic in nature, and, as Christine Hines notes, I should accordingly "relinquish claims to the kind

[96] "wElComE tO thE TaRot oF SneEzINg!" accessed October 15, 2014, http://tos.tarotgal.net/first.html.
[97] Angela Cora Garcia et al., "Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 38 (2009): 59.

of ethnographic authority that comes from exposing the emergent analysis to challenge through interaction."[98]

Instead, I want to engage with the text of SFF in order to analyze the affective qualities of reader-generated text about sneezing fetishism. As Hine observes, "viewing newsgroup contributions as textual can also provide some valuable insights" because one can be "primarily concerned with the reality which texts construct" while allowing readers to "develop their own interpretations" of this constructed reality.[99] On these Internet fetish forums, where the borders between fantasies and lived experience can be especially porous, I want to note how the textual construction of sneezing fetishism on SFF closely aligns with the more biological narrative of affect that Tomkins describes in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*. While these two texts operate on different registers, then, I can nonetheless observe that the textual shape of sneezing fetishism closely resembles the way in which Tomkins describes the affective mechanics of human sexuality.

Although this reading is not ethnographic, I will nonetheless pay respect to ethnographic guidelines for preserving the privacy of the posters. Garcia et al note that online ethnographers are divided in their approach to online archives: "While some argue that Web sites are analogous to magazines or television shows, and hence are intentionally and inherently 'public,' others argue that some Internet locations are inherently private."[100] For my purposes, I consider the text of these forums to be public but I will nonetheless follow Christine Hine's guidelines and make no reference to usernames or any 'real-world" identifying information. [101] While "sufficiently

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[98] Christine M. Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2000), 48.
[99] Ibid., 53.
[100] Garcia et al., "Ethnographic Approaches," 75.
[101] Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, 24.

committed" readers could technically find the cited posts by navigating to the URL or searching through the forums themselves, "changing identifiers" is a "situated compromise" that can add, at least, a single layer of privacy as I move now to read material that is publicly available online.[102]

But by way of introducing this reading, I begin with a brief theoretical rumination on a particularly generative moment in Richard von Krafft-Ebing's work for sneezing fetishism. In the late nineteenth century, Krafft-Ebing develops a theory of "sexual substances" which posits that sexuality is driven by, as Freud will later summarize, "the accumulation of the sexual substances."[103] And although Krafft-Ebing's biological literalism and his commitment to a reproductive notion of the drive prevent him from perceiving a more general principle beneath his theory of sexual substances, that general principle provides a particularly suggestive launching point for a consideration of sneezing fetishism. In Krafft-Ebing's own words, "physiological processes" such as the production of semen and ova "give rise to sexual ideas, images, and impulses" and the nervous system then "reacts" through erection and ejaculation.[104] In short: "The development of sexual life has its beginning in the organic sensations which arise from the maturing reproductive glands."[105] Freud soundly dismisses this theory of sexual substances in the following way in his "Three Essays":

> The weakness of this theory … lies in the fact that, having been designed to account for the sexual activity of males, it takes too little account of three sets of conditions which it should also be able to explain. These are the conditions in children, in females, and in castrated males. In none of these three cases can there

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[102] Ibid., 24.
[103] Freud, "Three Essays," 212.
[104] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*, 27.
[105] Ibid., 27.

> be any question of an accumulation of sexual products in the same sense as in males, and this makes a smooth application of the theory difficult.[106]

For a theorist who issues a radical challenge to our focus on genitality with the assertion that any "part of the skin" or even "any organ"[107] can become an erogenous zone, this reading of "sexual substances" as strictly referring to semen seems to be a missed opportunity for Freud to observe the way in which all bodily substances (semen, milk, blood, spit, snot, urine, vomit, tears, feces) can find themselves at the center of sexual practices. Indeed, Freud is partially constrained here by a drive-foundational theory that focuses primarily on organs and bodily zones, in which "the source of an instinct is a process of excitation occurring in an organ and the immediate aim of the instinct lies in the removal of this organic stimulus."[108] Here the "process of excitation"—which I should mark at the outset as a suggestively affective phrase—takes second place to this interplay of organs and instincts. Freud also momentarily elides this process of excitation altogether when he later speaks of the sexual instinct as simply "arising"[109] from erogenous zones, as if an erogenous zone were asphalt radiating the heat of sexuality. However dubious Krafft-Ebing's theory of sexual substances might be on a biological basis—and however committed he may be to a reproductive notion of the drive—he at least articulates a curve that underlies sexuality: pressure builds, tension results, and release brings sexual satisfaction. But ultimately, Freud and Krafft-Ebing are constrained by the need to consider bodily processes—and the affective responses to those processes—as a source for the sexual instinct, and not as, Tomkins might see it, the motor of sexuality itself.

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[106] Freud, "Three Essays," 213-214.
[107] Ibid., 233.
[108] Ibid., 168.
[109] Ibid., 168.

I open this reading with this consideration of Krafft-Ebing's apocryphal theory of sexual substances because it seems best equipped of all pre-Tomkinsian theories of sexuality to understand a phenomenon like sneezing fetishism even if it ultimately cannot embrace its affective contours in full. Although Krafft-Ebing develops this theory in order to explain the origin of the sexual instinct itself, if we bracket that purpose and preserve his theory as a general narrative—a curve—he can provide a compelling account that aligns with the basic shape of an affective theory of the eroticization of sneezing.

From a physiological perspective, in fact, sneezing behaves in much the same way that Krafft-Ebing describes his theory of sexual substances. Otorhinolaryngologists Murat Songu and Cemal Cingi describe sneezing as a "reflex [that] may be divided into two phases." In the first "sensitive phase," the "nasal mucosa" are stimulated by "chemical or physical irritants," in turn causing neural stimulation which increases until it reaches a "threshold." This threshold marks the start of the second phase, which Songu and Cingi refer to as "the efferent or respiratory phase." This phase "consists of eye closing, deep inspiration, and then a forced expiration with initial closing of the glottis, and increasing intrapulmonary pressure." Finally, the action commonly known as a sneeze is a "sudden dilation of the glottis [that] gives rise to an explosive exit of air through the mouth and nose, washing out mucosal debris and irritants."[110] Sneezing, then, can be plotted as a curve that matches the general shape of Krafft-Ebing's theory of sexual substances: Stimulation increases, resulting in a sharp increase of intrapulmonary pressure, followed by a "sudden," even "explosive" release.

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[110] Murat Songu and Cemal Cingi, "Sneeze Reflex: Facts and Fiction," *Therapeutic Advances in Respiratory Disease* 3 (2009): 132.

At this point, I can note that the function of sneezing on a physiological level closely resembles the way in which enjoyment-joy operates in Tomkins' theory of primary affects. For Tomkins, as we noted in Chapter One, enjoyment is an "affect that operates on the principle of stimulation reduction" and, in order for stimulation to be reduced, there must "be a prior level of high density of stimulation."[111] Tomkins graphs enjoyment as the only affect with a negative slope in terms of stimulation ("density of neural firing") over time and that it is the only affect that intersects with every other affect's particular "density of neural firing"[112]; all other affects, it seems, are always at risk of sliding down the slippery slope of joy, provided some moment of stimulation reduction. Given that sneezing and enjoyment are both innate biological responses that operate on the principle of stimulation reduction, it should not be a surprise to find them operating in close synchronicity with one another, whether in or out of an erotic context. Even outside the sneezing fetish community, in fact, the joys of sneezing are widely acknowledged, hence the popular Internet myth that sneezing is equivalent to one tenth of an orgasm.[113] Although many aspects of sneezing can be felt as distress (the increase in intrapulmonary pressure, the expulsion of mucus, or the discomfort of a lengthy sneezing fit, etc.) the feeling of release that accompanies a sneeze seems to be innately enjoyable, even for those who do not claim to have a penchant for it.

With the similarities between Krafft-Ebing's theory of sexual substances, Tomkins' theory of enjoyment, and the physiology of the sneeze in place, it is further noteworthy that the language of "release" pervades online discussions of sneezing

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[111] Silvan S. Tomkins, "Role of the Specific Affects," in *Exploring Affect: The Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tomkins*, ed. Virginia A. Demos (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 76-77.
[112] Tomkins, *Affect*, 140.
[113] "It's the Time for the Sneezin' of Love," last modified February 9, 2006, http://www.snopes.com/science/stats/sneeze.asp.

fetishism. In an FAQ on an archived, early sneezing erotica website, one webmaster attempts to explain how sneezing can be erotic:

> The obvious answer, to any sneeze fetishist is: it just plain is. We like the uncontrolled, unrestrained release of energy. The sound, the sight, the facial expression, the pauses and sniffles in between sneezes, we like it all. Nobody can hide who they are when they sneeze; for just that one second, they allow us a glimpse of something they can't hide, something they can't stop. It's beautiful—very sexy.[114]

Members of SFF, much like Drs. Songu and Cingi, also divide sneezing into two distinct phases: "buildup" and "release." For sneezing fetishists, the release seems to be especially crucial for the enjoyment of a sneeze, whether that sneeze is observed or experienced firsthand. For instance, one user notes that she likes sneezing because she "like[s] the sudden feeling of relief" and another observes that "it's hard to describe exactly what [he] feel[s], but it's sort of a combination of release, relief, excitement and relaxation all rolled into one."[115] I should note here, as I did in the above reading of fetish newsletters, that affective vocabulary abounds in these discussions of sneezing fetishism and that this vocabulary closely resembles Tomkins' description of enjoyment. But on SFF, release is not everything. Threads frequently appear on SFF in which members are asked to choose which phase of the sneeze they prefer: buildup or release, —or, as one member puts it: "Aaaaahs vs Chooooooooooo."[116] The answers to these queries demonstrate the same level of idiosyncratic variety seen in the fetish newsletters above:

> I just love a good build up. The gasping breaths, the heaving chest, and the look of desperation as they try to fight it.

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[114] "What the F.A.Q.?" accessed October 15, 2014, http://sneeze.dreamhosters.com/serotica/faq.html.
[115] "What is it that you like so much about sneezing?" last modified March 30, 2009, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=32704.
[116] "Aaaaahs vs Chooooooooooo," last modified October 19, 2013, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=52966.

> It really depends on the person and how they sneeze, but I *really* love the release! Exploossiooon~ >X)
>
> The release, definitely. The buildup is nice, but it's the release that gets me every time. Not sure why, but it does.[117]
>
> BUILD UP BUILD UP BUILD UP. Best part, definitely.
>
> I love build-ups, and I tend to hate when people sneeze without any kind of fanfare, but if it was a really good drawn-out release, I'd probably choose that over a good, drawn-out build-up. A build-up without a release is incredibly unsatisfying for everyone involved.
>
> It's a close call, but I think I enjoy the release more, as long as it's a nice, intense, consonant-filled release and not an outdrawn, wovel-filled [sic] one.[118]

If "release" as a physiological component of the sneeze innately evokes the affect of enjoyment, "buildup" corresponds neatly to the affect of interest in that both are defined by an increase of stimulation that seems to register as inherently positive in the discourse on SFF. In other words, I want to suggest that the alignment of Krafft-Ebing, Tomkins' theory of enjoyment, and the physiology of sneezing may be non-coincidental: a curve defined by an increase in stimulation followed by stimulation reduction is at the center of all three. With this potential correlation in mind, I can offer an initial sketch of the affective curve that seems to define the textual reality of sneezing fetishism: an interest in the buildup of a sneeze followed by the enjoyment of the release—a curve that closely mirrors the physiology of the sneeze itself and, incidentally, genital orgasmic sexuality. In some instances this curve is traced onto others who sneeze; in others, it is primarily described as being felt firsthand. In many cases, both are described as erotic.

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[117] "What's your favorite part of a sneeze?" last modified August 11, 2012, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=47342.
[118] "Aaaaahs vs Chooooooooooo," last modified October 19, 2013, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=52966.

Even granting the fact that varying preferences for buildup and release are expressed on SFF, this initial affective curve of excitement and enjoyment can function as nothing but an initial template for the full range of sneezing fetishism's possible affective curves. In addition to hosting discussion on the question of buildup or release, SFF is also the site of discussion about preferences for different speeds of sneezes. One thread entitled "Sudden Sneezes" finds some SFF members restating a commitment to buildups while others agree with the original poster that they like quick sneezes:

> I always feel my sneezes coming, and in other people's sneezes, the build-up's the best part!
>
> I'm a fan of both kinds, quick and drawn-out. Most opf [sic] the time, build-ups are awesome. Sometimes, sudden sneezes are adorable, though. Especially in cute guys. XD
>
> I do like sudden sneezes, especially from cute guys!!
>
> I actually adore it when someone has a sudden sneeze that catches them off guard…[119]

Here I might speculate that the affect of surprise-startle, which Tomkins identifies as an affect that "orients the individual to turn his attention away from one thing to another,"[120] can also alter the basic shape of the affective curve that characterizes sneezing fetishism. While most SFF members describe a preference for seeing their sneeze coming, those who enjoy these sudden, more "startling"[121] sneezes produce a slightly different affective curve in their accounts. But the role that surprise plays in that affective curve is likely a brief one. As Tomkins notes:

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[119] "Sudden Sneezes," last modified March 15, 2010, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=36621.
[120] Tomkins, *Affect*, 273.
[121] "Husband puts cayenne pepper on pizza," last modified July 17, 2011, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=42482.

> The experience of surprise itself is brief and varies from an essentially neutral quality in its milder form to a somewhat negative quality in its more intense form as the startle response. Whatever its quality, positive or negative, it is frequently confused with the affect which immediately follows it.[122]

Surprise itself is a fleeting and neutral affect. When we say something is a "pleasant surprise," Tomkins would note that we are likely confusing the affect that followed the surprise with the surprise itself. In the case of sudden, surprising, and startling sneezes, then, I can draw a variation on the affective curve of sneezing fetishism as follows: a neutral experience of surprise followed by a piquing of interest in or enjoyment of the surprising sneeze.

But the potential affective curves of sneezing fetishism grow even more varied in discussions on SFF. At this point, it may be helpful to visualize the affective curves of sneezing fetishism as waveforms that can be altered in terms of both frequency and amplitude: the speed with which the interest-enjoyment curve plays out can vary as well as the relative levels of stimulation involved, in both physiological and affective terms. To add to this complexity, SFF also plays host to discussions about the relative merits of loud versus quiet sneezes:

> Loud and proud!! No damn stifling!
> -Not screaming though. Loud to an acceptable level.
>
> A slight build up (but not obnoxious), and a forceful-but-not-loud sneeze to follow.
>
> Not too loud … excessively loud sneezes don't do it for me at all, especially if uncovered.
>
> Really uncontrollable sneezes, loud and multiple, allergy or dust induced.[123]

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[122] Tomkins, *Affect*, 273.
[123] "what kind of sneeze is your favourite," last modified June 4, 2010, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=37393.

But the variation in this already diverse array of affective curves can become more granular still. Some SFF members describe an enjoyment of being teased by buildups followed by a lack of release—a so-called "false alarm"[124]—while others report finding this situation "disappointing."[125] In affective terms here, I can observe a heightening of interest in the "false alarm" followed by either an enjoyment of being refused release, an enjoyment of ultimately finding release after several false alarms, or perhaps an immediate disappointment in the lack of release. In addition, discussions on SFF also focus on "stifles" in all their variety, perhaps nearly as much as they focus on the drama of buildup and release. There are "clean, cute stifles,"[126] "loud stifles,"[127] "failed stifles,"[128] "successful stifles," "silent stifles,"[129] etc. Stifles could be said to register as interruptions on the metaphorical waveform of sneezing fetishism's affective curve: some SFF members describe enjoying the quiet squelch of a stifle that mutes a loud release, others produce stories about attempted stifles that ultimately give way to a sneeze. Each of these scenarios involves its own unique combination and sequence of affects. Overall, I can observe that the basic template of an affective curve of sneezing fetishism is a curve of interest-enjoyment that echoes the physiological process of sneezing itself. This curve can and does have thousands of idiosyncratic variations in terms of shape, frequency, and amplitude depending on the individual fetishist.

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[124] "FINALLY!" last modified January 6, 2012, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=45024.
[125] "First Obs (F)," last modified January 7, 2007, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=20991.
[126] "Stifled Sneezes," last modified July 12, 2007, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=24306.
[127] "Part 2 of loud stifles (f)," last modified April 5, 2006, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=15679.
[128] "The failed stifle (m)," last modified November 29, 2009, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=34659.
[129] "Preferred style/sound of a stifled sneeze…?" last modified August 15, 2007, http://www.sneezefetishforum.org/forums/index.php?showtopic=23257.

When we consider Krafft-Ebing's theory of sexual substances in light of Tomkins' theory of affects and the discourse of SFF, I can note that the failure of Krafft-Ebing's theory might not lie in his attention to a bodily process defined by a buildup of pressure followed by a release but rather in the task of trying to locate the sexual instinct itself in this physiological process. If we accept Tomkins' proposition that affects are at the core of human sexuality, however, these elements align more neatly: the dynamic of buildup and release is not erotic in itself but rather because of the affective curves that motivate, accompany, and surround it. These affective curves are both the underlying mechanism behind Krafft-Ebing's theory of sexual substances and the motivation behind the "process[es] of excitation" that Freud identifies as the "source"[130] of the sexual instinct.

Affective Management

In the previous half of this chapter, I showed that affective language was salient in fetish literature produced outside the ambit of clinical study. In the final half of this chapter, however, I want to turn to twentieth-century clinical literature itself in order to prove that the affective aspects of sexual fetishism are textually salient even within the fields that are seemingly the least inclined to look for them. As a methodological tactic, looking for affect in this literature recalls Foucault's observation that a genealogical method "must seek [sentiments, love, conscience, etc.] in the most unpromising places."[131] In keeping with that method, I will attempt to "trace" the presence of affect in various clinical scenes from the mid twentieth century. As with the previous half of this chapter which progressed from a general survey of broad literature into a more narrow reading of a particular fetish, this half will follow a similar pattern. In this section, I review a broad

[130] Freud, "Three Essays," 168.
[131] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 76.

range of mid twentieth-century aversion therapy literature before proceeding to a specific reading of erotic vomiting through the single academic resource available on that fetish.

In 1956, British behaviorist psychiatrist M.J. Raymond's article "Case of Fetishism Treated by Aversion Therapy" inaugurates two decades worth of attempts to cure sexual fetishism through the use of conditioning and aversion therapy. Raymond's approach to fetishism is directly informed by the drive-foundational theories on which is approach is based; his svelte bibliography references Binet, Freud, Hirschfeld, and Krafft-Ebing. Raymond also refers to fetishism as an "aberration"[132]—a term that means "deviation" or "departure"[133]—revealing the implicit concept of fetishism as a turning away of the drive or sexual instinct at work in his approach. Prior to this point, as Raymond observes, there had only been a handful of cases of allegedly curing fetishism via therapy, psychoanalysis, and temporal lobectomy;[134] his is the first behaviorist attempt on record.

Raymond's patient expresses erotic fantasies pertaining to prams and handbags and, in his case, these fantasies are accompanied by the idea of "damage being caused to them by their owners."[135] The patient comes under Raymond's supervision because he has been damaging prams in public, earning the ire of the police in the process. Raymond treats him by showing him "a collection of handbags, perambulators, and coloured illustrations" directly "after he had received an injection of apomorphine and just before nausea was produced." Throughout this treatment, which proceeds on a "two-hourly"

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[132] M.J. Raymond, "Case of Fetishism Treated by Aversion Therapy," *British Medical Journal* 2 (1956): 854.
[133] "aberration, n.". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/251?redirectedFrom=aberration (accessed January 23, 2015).
[134] Raymond, "Case of Fetishism," 857.
[135] Ibid., 854-855.

schedule, the patient is denied food and kept awake with amphetamines.[136] Eventually, he reports "that the mere sight of the objects [makes] him sick." And even though he does "not consider it all necessary," he returns to Raymond after six months to watch a film of "women carrying handbags and pushing prams" while taking emetic drugs to induce nausea.[137] Raymond's measure of his patient's success—as it will be in much of the behaviorist literature that follows in his wake—is the return of genital heterosexual intercourse: "[H]e reported jubilantly that he had for the first time been able to have intercourse with his wife without the use of the old fantasies."[138]

Raymond's case sets the pattern for most of the attempts to treat fetishism in the heyday of behaviorist psychology. In 1963, D.F. Clark treats a man with a fetish for "his wife's girdle and stockings" through apomorphine-based aversion therapy.[139] That same year, Alan Cooper uses aversion therapy to treat a young British transvestite through the use of emetic drugs that induce nausea and vomiting combined with scathing verbal attacks.[140] In 1972, Burton S. Glick treats a patient with a fetish for women's underwear using a form of aversion therapy based on hypnotic suggestion.[141] In 1976, Janusz Stryzewsky and Maria Zierhoffer treat a transvestic fetishist with apomorphium which produces "ringing sounds in the head, nausea, and sometimes vomiting."[142] In 1977, Malcolm Kushner delivers "41 shock sessions" of electroshock aversion therapy over "14

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[136] Ibid., 855-856.
[137] Ibid., 856.
[138] Ibid., 855.
[139] D.F. Clark, "Fetishism Treated by Negative Conditioning," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 109 (1963): 404-407.
[140] Alan J. Cooper, "A Case of Fetishism and Impotence Treated by Behavior Therapy," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 109 (1963): 649-653.
[141] Glick S. Burton, "Aversive Imagery Therapy Using Hypnosis," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 26, no. 3 (1972): 432-436.
[142] Janusz Stryzewsky and Maria Zierhoffer, "Aversion Therapy in a Case of Fetishism with Transvestic Component," *The Journal of Sex Research* 3, no. 2 (1967): 165.

weeks of treatment" to a man with a fetish for women's underwear.[143] That same year, I.K. Bond and D.R. Evans treat two men with a fetish for stealing women's underwear with electroshock therapy, intentionally setting the shock "10 volts higher than the subject's reported upper threshold."[144] Throughout this entire time period, too, fetishism was treated with multiple approaches in even more studies; as Thomas Wise summarizes in 1985, up to that point, fetishism had been treated with lobectomies, neuroleptics, anti-androgens, psychotherapy, and behavioral therapy.[145]

In this section, I consider the first three of the behavioral therapy cases mentioned above in order to highlight the perhaps unexpected affective dimensions of this literature. At the outset, I want to mark that even in these behaviorist attempts to cure fetishism—which are based in drive-foundational theories of sexual fetishism that seem to presume that a "normal" heterosexual drive will reassert itself in the conditioned absence of fetishism—the affective qualities of sexual fetishism are eminently clear, emerging even in the theoretical approaches that are least equipped to take stock of them. Elsewhere in this chapter, I have demonstrated that the affective qualities of sexual fetishism are salient in discourse produced by sexual fetishists but, in this section, I argue that they also make themselves manifest even in literature that is ostensibly not about affect but rather about redirecting the drive or sexual instinct through the use of behavioral therapy. Indeed, these ostensible aversion therapies—however they are conceived on the surface—implicitly function as practices of what I would term *affective management*.

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[143] Malcolm Kushner, "The Reduction of a Long-Standing Fetish by Means of Aversive Conditioning," in *Handbook of Behavior Therapy with Sexual problems: Volume II: Approaches to Specific Problems*, eds. Joel Fischer and Harvey L. Gochros (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977): 445.
[144] I.K. Bond and D.R. Evans, "Avoidance Therapy: Its Use in Two Cases of Underwear Fetishism" in *Handbook of Behavior Therapy with Sexual problems: Volume II: Approaches to Specific Problems*, eds. Joel Fischer and Harvey L. Gochros (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977): 450.
[145] Thomas N. Wise, "Fetishism—Etiology and Treatment: A Review from Multiple Perspectives," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 26, no. 3 (1985): 249-257.

D.F. Clark's approach to his transvestic fetishist, for example, is drive-foundational in that he assumes that his patient's "secondary drive derives from the accidental discovery of the sexual pleasures of female garments at a stage when the patient's sex drive had not fixed completely on a full heterosexual object."[146] As a method of treatment, nurses administer apomorphine to the patient while he both examines pictures of girdles and stockings and puts them on. While this is taking place, Clark also requires his patient to listen to a tape that he (the patient) had made the night before in which he "soliloquize[s] on the special delights of his fetishism."[147] At one point in treatment, Clark is particularly delighted that "by a particularly happy chance one of his favourite pictures fell into the vomit in the basin so that the patient had to see it every time he puked."[148] But Clark unwittingly reveals the practices of affective management at the core of his aversion therapy in his description of the interaction between the psychologist and the patient as the audio recording played back:

> … just as the patient's voice had finished a description of his erotic pleasures the psychologist would cut in with '… but now, when you do that you feel …' (Patient says) 'sick.' (Psychologist) 'How do you feel?' (Patient) 'Sick.' (Psychologist) 'And now you're wearing …' (Patient) 'a girdle and stockings.' (Psychologist) 'And you just feel …' (Patient) '… sick and ill,' etc. (Psychologist) 'You're sick when you listen to what you enjoyed about girdles and stockings.' (Plays patient's recording again) 'Now it makes you vomit,' etc. The recording's volume was increased to flood the patient's auditory input and to be heard over his retching and vomiting noises.

In this harrowing scene, it becomes clear that what is fundamentally at stake in this particular practice of aversion therapy is not re-orienting or eliminating a "secondary drive" but rather managing the patient's affective orientation toward the fetish objects in question. Whatever the patient "enjoyed" about girdles and stockings must be replaced

[146] Clark, "Negative Conditioning," 405.
[147] Ibid., 403.
[148] Ibid., 405.

with a "sick" feeling, indeed, with the affect of disgust. As Tomkins writes, disgust is "a much more extreme response than hanging the head in shame at an interrupted, possibly contaminated, good scene" because "[i]n shame there is every intention to return to the good scene, whereas in disgust the good scene has become unambiguously malignant and is to be spit out or vomited forth."[149] Clark's goal is to reduce his patient's desire to return to the scene of wearing girdles and stockings, to render that scene "unambiguously malignant" and vomit-inducing.

Disgust is an affect that seeks the absolute repudiation of an object. Tomkins notes that if shame has the structure "I want, but," then disgust can best be captured by the simple utterance "I don't want."[150] And although many objects induce disgust naturally, Tomkins also notes that disgust can be learned, in a passage that seems to trace the logic of Clark's study with terrifying accuracy:

> When an individual learns to respond with disgust to some object which does not have a malodorous taste or smell, this is generally mediated by some similarity to the biological conditions under which the drive mechanism of disgust or nausea is ordinarily activated.[151]

If sexuality is understood to be primarily affective rather than drive-foundational, then it is clear that the tacit logic behind Clark's attempt to cure sexual fetishism is not to alter the drive but rather to replicate, through the administration of apomorphine, the "biological conditions" that normally activate disgust or nausea. The implicit hope is that because disgust is diametrically opposed—in terms of its relationship to its object—to excitement and enjoyment, that a learned disgust will mitigate the enjoyment of the fetish. Although firmly rooted in drive-foundational theories, then, Clark's practice trades

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[149] Tomkins, *Affect*, 741.
[150] Ibid., 412.
[151] Ibid., 412.

entirely in affect in ways that hint at its primacy for both sexuality and human motivation writ large. If the only way to change the operation of a "drive" is to alter a person's affective stance toward an object, then that method certainly corroborates Tomkins' insight that the "primary motivational system is the affective system, and the biological drives have motivational impact only when amplified by the affective system."[152]

In the same year as Clark's case, Alan Cooper deploys a similar form of aversion therapy that likewise participates in practices of affective management. Like Raymond and Clark before him, Cooper's work is based on a drive-foundational understanding of fetishism as one of the "perversions" and a form of "aberrant sexual behavior."[153] He argues that "[i]n the case under discussion the fetishistic act had been the first learned habit to satisfy the sex drive and had prevented the establishment of normal sexual behavior" and, like his predecessors in this approach, his treatment seems to be based on the assumption that, if he can eliminate the fetish, "normal sexual behavior" will reassert itself. In particular, Cooper treats a 25-year-old married man who is deemed to have transvestic fetishism because "he was caught indulging his fetishism in the ladies' cloakroom."[154] Of interest from a Tomkinsian perspective, however, Cooper notes that cross-dressing "acquired anxiety-reducing propensities" [155] for his patient, an observation that aligns with C.C. Gosselin's aforementioned realization that rubber seems to "relieve tensions"[156] for rubber fetishists.

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[152] Ibid., 4.
[153] Cooper, "Case of Fetishism," 649.
[154] Ibid., 649.
[155] 1bid., 650.
[156] Gosselin, "Rubber Fetishist," 19.

Cooper's treatment method is similar to Clark's in the use of nausea-inducing drugs, with Cooper preferring emetine hydrochloride to apomorphine.[157] On the first day, the patient's treatment proceeds as follows:

> At 10 a.m. he was given the emetic preparation and was instructed to dress ready to perform his perversion. Great pains were taken to ensure that the total situation was identical with that in which he would normally practice his abnormal behavior, the room being darkened and a full length mirror provided. Five minutes after the injection he was left alone and told to perform accurately his fetishism. It was explained that if nausea and vomiting eliminated, or at least preceded the satisfaction resulting from the fetishistic act, optimum results could be expected.[158]

The practices of affective management at the heart of this approach are already clear: The fact that the patient experiences his fetish as being "anxiety-reducing"[159] coheres neatly with an understanding that the affect of enjoyment "operate[s] on the principle of stimulation reduction."[160] Anxiety, as Donald L. Nathanson observes is one of the "milder forms of fear,"[161] which is, in turn, a negative affect marked by a heightened degree of negative stimulation. The fact that fetishistic enjoyment is capable of reducing anxiety, then, aligns with the baseline expectations of an affective theory of sexuality. For Cooper, however, this enjoyment is the natural enemy of his treatment approach and must be replaced with "nausea and vomiting"[162] instead.

But Cooper adds another layer of affective management to his treatment that reverberates even more alarmingly with other key features of Tomkins' theory of disgust:

> In practice the patient never once had an emission. He experienced strong erections, but before the completion of the act, he was invariably overcome by nausea and vomiting. With the onset of nausea and vomiting the patient was

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[157] Ibid., 652-653.
[158] Ibid., 650.
[159] Ibid., 649.
[160] Tomkins, *Affect*, 142.
[161] Donald L. Nathanson, "Prologue: Affect, Imagery, Consciousness" in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, ed. Bertram P. Karon (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008), xviii.
[162] Clark, "Negative Conditioning," 405.

> returned to bed and given intensive moral suggestion. This commenced with a condemnatory attack on his abnormal behavior and such words as 'beastly,' 'disgusting,' etc., were used. This was immediately followed by frankly optimistic remarks suggesting that the patient could get better and that such recovery could lead to a happier and fuller life.[163]

Cooper pairs the emetic drugs with verbal attacks that use distinctly affective vocabulary. These attacks may seem excessive, even redundant, but, as Tomkins notes, disgust for objects that do not have a "malodorous taste or small" can be learned via others, through a process he terms "redintegration," or the recreation of a whole from a part:

> The learning of disgust can also be mediated by seeing the look of disgust on the face of the other through redintegration. Just as the yawn and the smile, visually perceived, can be a sufficient part of the total matrix of the feedback of the past experience of the face to redintegrate the yawn or smile, so the visual appearance of disgust can provide the cue to redintegrate the translator messages from the visual look of disgust to the motor messages to trigger the disgust reaction in the self … In redintegrated disgust the individual may even hate the other if the other is expressing disgust or contempt towards him, but nonetheless respond with the same disgust whether he wishes to or not…[164]

For Tomkins, disgust can be learned vicariously by inhabiting the disgust of the other or, more technically speaking, by extrapolating his or her disgust from a look or a stern word. This vicariously-induced disgust can be powerful enough to persist even in the face of the hatred of the other. In this light, Cooper's use of scathing verbal attacks—which deploy the term "disgusting" in a straightforward but nonetheless revealing way—are not just attempts to reinforce the effects of the emetine hydrochloride but rather a distinct form of affective aversion therapy in their own right. Cooper wants to force his patient to mirror the disgust of the other, to mimic it against his will and in spite of his resentment for the research team. This effect does indeed bear out as Tomkins might suggest it would: Even though the patient "expressed a good deal of animosity towards the

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[163] Cooper, "Case of Fetishism," 650.
[164] Tomkins, *Affect*, *412*-413.

therapist" starting on the third day, he vomits at "the sight of clothes alone" by the fifth day.[165] Eventually, he is "unable to contemplate his former behavior without being overwhelmed by strong feelings of disgust and revulsion."[166]

As with Raymond's case, Cooper's measure of success is the fact that the patient returns to—and the affective language should indeed be noted here—"enjoying a normal sexual relationship with his wife" and having "satisfactory intercourse about once a week."[167] His "disgusting perversion,"[168] as Cooper refers to it, is replaced by the habit that should have been, to his mind, "the first learned habit to satisfy the sex drive."[169] But like Raymond and Clark before him, Cooper cannot seem to work directly on the drive; the fact that he turns to affect as the primary vocabulary of his theory unwittingly reveals the primacy of affect in the realm of human sexuality.

The last case I will consider here is psychotherapist Glick S. Burton's 1973 attempt to treat a patient with a fetish for women's underwear using a drug-free form of aversion therapy in which he attempts to pair "nauseous feeling with imagined scenes depicting pathologic behavior … while the patient was in the hypnotic state."[170] Burton, too, practices a form of aversion therapy that amounts to a form of affective management. When describing the fetishist he is treating, he notes that a "quite specific affective constellation overwhelmed him when he saw a seductively clad woman."[171] Burton treats the patient by placing him under hypnosis and reciting disgusting scenes to him, in a way that recalls Cooper's calculated verbal attacks:

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[165] Cooper, "Case of Fetishism," 651.
[166] Ibid., 651.
[167] Ibid., 651.
[168] Ibid., 650.
[169] Ibid., 652.
[170] Burton, "Aversive Imagery," 432.
[171] Ibid., 433.

> Most of the scenes used were suggested by the patient prior to the sessions. A few were of my own devising. Some of them were truly calculated to produce nausea and disgust. … Among the most offensive were the following:
>
> 'Visualize a pair of panties and a pair of black stockings stained with urine and covered with feces.'
>
> 'Visualize your mother's panties in the sink, all covered with feces.'[172]

Burton may not use drugs to replicate the "biological conditions"[173] that typically activate disgust, but activating that affect is his stated and, indeed, "calculated" goal. The purpose of his hypnotic therapy is, most simply, to replace one "affective constellation" with another. Burton's approach reveals that even if those biological conditions cannot be satisfied, Cooper's attempts to vicariously induce disgust can still be incorporated into forms of aversion therapy that are seemingly less violent on a physical level. The disjuncture between the drive-foundational theories of fetishism cited by all of these men and the patently obvious affective basis for their treatment approach ought to give them pause and cause them to consider, as Tomkins does, that the "urgency" of the drives may have "been exaggerated"[174] relative to the affect system. Taken together with those who practiced aversion therapy before him, Burton's calculated disgust-centric approach to treating fetishism reveals that it is a primarily affective experience that can, therefore, only be meaningfully challenged on affective grounds.

Erotic Vomiting

"Erotic Vomiting" by psychoanalytic theorist Robert Stoller is a slim article composed of three case histories bookended by some brief introductory remarks and a bullet-point list of conclusions. It is also the single piece of academic literature devoted to the subject of

[172] Ibid., 434.
[173] Ibid., 436.
[174] Tomkins, *Affect*, 32.

erotic vomiting. Erotic vomiting makes a notable appearance at the conclusion of Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's pathmaking essay "Sex in Public,"[175] an appearance which I will consider further in Chapter Three. Of the three case histories in "Erotic Vomiting," only one is thorough and given to Stoller in a clinical context. But the woman in this case history produces a rich textual description of erotic vomiting that closely resembles the affective curves of sneezing fetishism as constructed on SFF. In this section, I will attempt to trace a potential affective curve for erotic vomiting through this case history.

When asked to explain erotic vomiting to Stoller, his patient notes: "When I begin to vomit I get a 'rush.' My thought about a 'rush' is, a flood of good feelings throughout my entire body." She adds: "Anyway, I enjoy vomiting."[176] Her case history, too, is peppered with other details about vomiting that appeal to Stoller's clinical framework: the age at which it became pleasurable, its interaction with her burglary, etc. But it concludes with this evocative and affective passage that compares vomiting to orgasm:

> Vomiting for me is like sex or an orgasm in that I'm tensed, I feel the rush or intense flood of good feelings almost continually throughout the vomiting and experience relief and quiet warmth in my body when I'm finished. It is not identical to an orgasm. I do not feel it intensely in my genitals alone, but I do feel it there as well as the rest of my body and feel pleasure in my mouth. It does not excite me to think about vomiting. I do not have fantasies about vomiting. It doesn't excite me to see other people vomit. Yet, I make myself vomit often …[177]

Beyond the obvious affective quality of this description of erotic vomiting, it is noteworthy that Stoller simply dumps it at the end of his analysis without any further commentary. Instead, Stoller introduces the case with framing material from his clinical observations. Stoller notes that "[s]he has been a vomiter since infancy" and recounts that "[o]ne of her first memories is of being abandoned by her mother, expelled from the

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[175] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," Critical Inquiry 24, no. 2 (1998): 547–566.
[176] Robert Stoller, "Erotic Vomiting," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 11, no. 4 (1982): 363.
[177] Ibid., 362.

household (before age 5) and transported by car to a cold and powerful grandmother," a memory that has become powerfully associated with "the resulting vomiting episode in the car." And based on his interactions with her, Stoller declares that vomiting "has always been a primitive form of communication for her, emerging out of a raging, murderous intimacy between herself and her mother,"[178] an analysis that resonates with his description of perversion in his earlier monograph on the subject as "the erotic form of hatred."[179] In so doing, Stoller provides a clear example of the sort of questions that must be asked of sexual practices such as these in order to shore up a particular drive-foundational concept of perversion.

But the woman in this case history also produces an affectively rich text that exceeds Stoller's limited framework, radically decentralizing sexuality from the genitals and describing vomiting as the object of the affect of enjoyment. The centrality of enjoyment in this narrative of erotic vomiting can be seen in her description of "a rush of good feelings," followed by an experience of "relief" and a feeling of "quiet warmth."[180] This description of vomiting shares more than a little vocabulary with Tomkins' description of enjoyment, an affect marked by "sudden relief" that is "activated … by any relatively steep reduction of the density of stimulation and neural firing."[181] And unlike the discourse on SFF, this case history does not make reference to any anticipatory excitement—she even specifies that "[i]t does not excite her to think about vomiting—only noting a prior feeling of being "tensed."[182] Indeed, while enjoyment requires a "prior level of sufficient density of stimulation, so that the requisite change is possible," that

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[178] Ibid., 362.
[179] Robert J. Stoller, *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred* (New York: Pantheon, 1975).
[180] Stoller, "Erotic Vomiting," 364.
[181] Tomkins, *Affect*, 204.
[182] Stoller, "Erotic Vomiting," 362.

stimulation need not necessarily come about through excitement—as it seems to do in the affective curves described on SFF. Even if the feeling of having to vomit is experienced as distressing, enjoyment can result from any "sudden relief from such negative stimulation as pain, or fear or distress or aggression."[183] The woman in this case history, then, produces a relatively straightforward affective curve for erotic vomiting: tension followed by enjoyment, release, and relief.

Like Stoller's patient, Tomkins also makes note of orgasm as being just one of many ways enjoyment can manifest itself: "The same principle operates with the sudden reduction of pleasure, as after the orgasm or the completion of a good meal, there is often the smile of pleasure."[184] Taken together, the comparison of vomiting to orgasm alongside the almost casual equivalence Tomkins draws between an orgasm and a "good meal" serve to decentralize sexuality, positioning it as one of many manifestations of positive affect. This positioning resonates with my observation in Chapter One that an affective theory of sexuality is not invested in outlining sexuality as a special or exceptional subset of human affect that requires its own unique motivational mechanism. When considered as a strange deviation of a drive that should normally culminate in genital stimulation, a practice like erotic vomiting might seem "rare or bizarre,"[185] as it strikes Stoller. But within Tomkins' theoretical framework, the idea that vomiting is an inherently enjoyable because steep reduction of tension is not bizarre but expected.

In the conclusion of Stoller's article, he reflects on his decision to publish these case histories, a choice that he feels would be more at home in a classic sexological text:

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[183] Tomkins, *Affect*, 204.
[184] Ibid., 204.
[185] Stoller, "Erotic Vomiting, 361.

> It may seem regressive to return to publishing the specifics of erotic behavior à la Krafft-Ebing, H. Ellis, and others. To do so could, however, help us. In the details (which I suspect, are almost never reported by patients in treatment and are not found in the literature—only in pornography, where they are more mythic than true-to-life) are clues to what goes on in the experience—how it felt, what it meant, why it was done—with the complexity and layering of the elements united into what seems on the surface a spontaneous, simple act.[186]

The details that Stoller reproduces in his case histories do indeed provide clues to "how [erotic vomiting] felt," which, if we consider affect as the primary source of motivation à la Tomkins, may also provide clues as to "why it was done." Strangely enough, Stoller's comments here even contain traces of Foucault who that same year, as noted in the Introduction, remarked in an interview that sexual behavior also consists of "the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it."[187] But Stoller reproduces these details within a theoretical framework that is not equipped to acknowledge the primacy of affect, one that remains more invested in determining and locating an unconscious motivation for a seemingly abnormal behavior than in exploring this details further. As I have attempted to show here, Tomkins' theory of affect can provide the conceptual tools for that exploration.

Conclusion

As I have noted earlier, near the start of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, Tomkins argues that "many psychologists regard … affective responses as a surgeon looks upon an inflamed appendix, something vestigial which might have been useful somewhere in man's distant past."[188] But reading fetishes through a theoretical framework that regards affective curves as primary to sexuality rather than ancillary to it can bring us closer to

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[186] Ibid., 365.
[187] Foucault, "Sexual Choice," 141-142.
[188] Tomkins, *Affect*, 23.

answering the question “How does a fetish feel?” In the above readings, I have attempted to demonstrate that Tomkins’ theory of affect might be especially generative for both describing sexual fetishes and identifying the affective curves that seem to underlie their textual expression. In so doing, too, I have sidestepped the focus of drive-foundational theories on etiology and on maintaining sharp dividing lines between sexual and other forms of behavior; instead, I have interfaced directly with the affective language of fetishism that emerges in both clinical and non-clinical literature. In the next chapter, I will turn to the broader implications of thinking about sexuality as primarily affective, and of surrendering the need to maintain sexuality as a category apart from affect.

Chapter Three
~~Perversion~~

Weak Theory

In Chapter One, I argued that an affective theory of sexuality would primarily make idiosyncratic and descriptive claims about the affective curves of excitement and enjoyment that define sexual fetishism. In the previous chapter, I attempted to model that process in order to show that the basic principles of an affective theory can be applied to forms of sexual variation like sexual fetishism from a different and more descriptive angle than would drive-foundational theories of sexuality. If the affective readings in the last chapter have seemed somewhat unsystematic, perhaps even loose or uncertain about what sexuality itself *is*, it may be because thinking affectively about sexuality requires what Tomkins might label a weak theoretical approach to the subject, an approach more concerned with the intimate details of sexual variation than with its stark definition.

In this chapter, I argue that an affective theory of sexuality—and particularly sexual fetishism—could be all the more effective for its weakness, especially when contrasted with classic feminist and queer approaches to fetishism and perversion. In particular, I put forward the possibility that an affective theory of sexuality can function as what Tomkins might call a "weak theory" of sexuality, a concept that seems especially generative for Sedgwick's own use of Tomkins throughout her career. As opposed to a strong theory of sexuality which sees sexuality as a distinct, delineated force that can be observed and located everywhere, a weak theory of sexuality might only engage with sexuality in more "restricted"[1] and local settings, and it might appear at first glance to be

[1] Tomkins, *Affect*, 459.

"little better than a description of the phenomena which it purports to explain."[2] This weaker approach to sexuality would, of necessity, run counter to the way in which feminist and queer studies have typically positioned sexual fetishism and the broader category of perversion as distinct concepts with a particular political and conceptual purchase.

In order to articulate the central argument of this chapter, I will first return to *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* in order to position an affective theory of sexuality as a primarily and productively weak theory of sexuality, drawing as well from Sedgwick's own use of the concept of weak theory throughout her work. I will suggest further that the drive-foundational theories of sexuality I discussed in the Introduction are strong theories of sexuality. Then, turning my attention to the place of fetishism—or seeming lack thereof—in feminist and queer studies, I will suggest that feminist and queer theory have historically relied on strong, drive-foundational theories of sexuality for illocutionary—which, following J.L Austin's theory of speech acts,[3] describes utterances that have communicative value beyond their semantic content—rather than descriptive aims. Indeed, drive-foundational approaches to perversion and fetishism are often invoked in feminist and queer theory in order to make pragmatic arguments instead of being used to explore those forms of sexuality in a more straightforward way. I will further argue that the absence of fetishism from feminist and queer studies has been an unwittingly strategic—if not an intentional—move for maintaining the primacy drive-foundational theories of sexuality within these fields. In other words, I argue that feminist

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[2] Ibid., 519.
[3] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, eds., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

and queer theory leave sexual fetishism unexplored precisely because a thorough interrogation of its status as the "model perversion" would be tantamount to surrendering the alternatingly pathologizing or transgressive rhetorical connotations of perversion that are made available by drive-foundational theories of sexuality. Engaging with fetishism from an affective perspective that renders it an unexceptional form of sexual variation—interesting because of its own affective contours but *not* because of its sociopolitical meanings—would be to surrender some of the sharpest critiques and claims to transgression that feminist and queer theory have offered in the past forty years. In the end, I will ask what it might mean to produce weak theories of sexuality and to surrender the use of fetishism and perversion as critical tools.

Strength in Weakness

Silvan Tomkins first introduces the concept of "weak theory," not as a mode of academic theory but rather as a qualifying feature of the experience of individual affects. In its first occurrence in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, he writes: "A weak shame theory is like any other weak theory. It accounts for little more than itself."[4] What this means is that "it accounts for little and is activated relatively infrequently."[5] Someone with a strong theory of shame might experience intense shame at the slightest misstep (e.g. dropping a book on the subway, being a minute late) but someone with a weak theory of shame would be able to endure these experiences without activating shame at all, reserving that affect instead for more dire situations. As Sedgwick and Frank note,[6] Tomkins returns several times to the example of "the man at the curb" to explain weak theory. If the man at the

[4] Tomkins, *Affect*, 454.
[5] Ibid., 454.
[6] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 27-28.

curb has a strong theory of fear, he will be unable to cross the street. [7] If he has a weak theory of fear, he will only be afraid when there is fast-moving traffic. In this sense, then, weak theories can be effective tools for survival as they allow one to avoid the "monopolistic" domination of a single affect that "snowballs"[8] through all of an individual's behaviors, utterly controlling his or her behavior.

Weak theory begins as a concept specific to the application and activation of affects in certain situations but later in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, Tomkins suggests what weak theory might mean on a more metatextual level by way of an analogy to "scientific theory":

> Any theory of wide generality is capable of accounting for a wide spectrum of phenomena which appear to be very remote, one from the other, and from a common source. This is a commonly accepted criterion by which the explanatory power of any scientific theory can be evaluated. To the extent to which the theory can account only for "near" phenomena, it is a weak theory, little better than a description of the phenomena which it purports to explain. As it orders more and more remote phenomena to a single formulation, its power grows.[9]

For Tomkins, a strong scientific theory is one that considers disparate phenomena solely within the framework of a single unifying rubric. A weak theory, by contrast, deals with a more "restricted domain"[10] and a more immanent one. A weak theory is more concerned with description than it is seduced by its own explanatory power but it is always at risk of becoming strong if it attempts to reduce phenomena "to a single formulation."[11]

It is this more generalized sense of weak theory that catches Eve Sedgwick's attention as she begins to read Tomkins, presumably in the mid-1990s. In a footnote in the introduction to *Shame and its Sisters*, she and Frank write that the strength or

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[7] Tomkins, *Affect*, 459.
[8] Ibid., 475.
[9] Ibid., 519.
[10] Ibid., 459.
[11] Ibid., 519.

weakness of a theory is determined by "the size and topology of the domain which it organizes and its methods of determining that domain."[12] They further note that "weak theory's domain can be thought of as pockets of terrains each in analogic relation to the others and expandable only by textured analogy" as opposed to the domain of strong theory which is "more digital" and "more highly organized and expandable by analogies evacuated of certain qualities."[13] Whereas a strong theory insists on categorizing and explaining every phenomenon it encounters, a weak theory is more casual in its approach to new conceptual territory. As Sedgwick and Frank note: "If a weak theory encounters some terrain unlike any it has ever tripped over—if it can't understand this terrain as significantly similar or resemblant enough to one or more in its domain—it will throw up its hands, shrug its shoulders, [and] remain dumb."[14] Later, in her famous essay on paranoid versus reparative reading styles, Sedgwick notes that strong theories have a "wide reach and rigorous exclusiveness" and, as such, they risk "being strongly tautological," doing little more than "proving the assumptions with which [they] began."[15] A weak theory, by contrast, is more invested in description than it is in proving itself. Heather Love, in a reflection on Sedgwick's work, notices too that while "strong theory can organize vast amounts of territory and tell big truths, it misses the descriptive richness of weak theory,"[16] which, as she notes, "stays local, gives up on hypervigilance

[12] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 27.
[13] Ibid., 28.
[14] Ibid., 28.
[15] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You" in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 14.
[16] Heather Love, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (2010): 237.

for attentiveness; instead of powerful reductions, it prefers acts of noticing, being affected, taking joy, and making whole."[17]

This generalized notion of "weak theory" proves to be valuable throughout Sedgwick's work, arguably even before she publishes any books or articles on Tomkins. Some of her famous axioms in *Epistemology of the Closet*, for example, are so invigorating precisely because they model this shoulder-shrugging quality of weak theory, a quality quite unlike the prevailing voice of critical theory at the time. The claim that "[p]eople are different from each other,"[18] for example, resonates so forcefully because it leaves ample room to conceptualize the idiosyncrasies of human difference apart from the "inconceivably coarse axes of categorization" that are often deployed in the social sciences and critical humanities.[19] The "reasonably rich, unsystematic resources of nonce taxonomy,"[20] too, are made possible by the weakness of that mode of knowledge production, by its refusal to reduce human difference to a handful of principles. For Sedgwick, psychoanalytic theory seemed, at first, to offer resources for thinking through human difference in a nonce-y way but ultimately proved to be too "sleeked down to such elegant operational entities as *the* mother, *the* father, *the* preoedipal, *the* oedipal, *the* other or Other"[21]and, as I might suggestively add here, the drive or the sexual instinct. Nonce taxonomy is a decidedly weak mode of theory making that does not seek to slim down but rather to expand casually and analogically. Beyond *Epistemology*, too, much of Sedgwick's practices of close reading throughout her career are likewise all the more effective for their weakness. Sedgwick herself recognizes this

[17] Ibid., 238.
[18] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 22.
[19] Ibid., 22.
[20] Ibid., 23.
[21] Ibid., 24.

aspect of her work in *Novel Gazing* when she describes her "unhurried, undefensive, theoretically galvanized practice of close reading"[22] in conjunction with a casual commitment to weak theory.

It is not the case, however, that Sedgwick believes that weak theory is somehow inherently superior to strong theory but it is clear that she believes it has often been elided by stronger modes of theory making. As Love observes, "[D]espite the methodological gains and affective appeal of the turn away from critique, I just don't think it's possible to read Sedgwick's essay on paranoid and reparative reading as *only* a call for reparative reading."[23] I would argue, however, that the methodological gains of weak theory for the study of sexuality have not yet been fully explored and that an affective theory of sexuality is strong where it needs to be strong and productively weak elsewhere. Indeed, if some of the conceptual utility of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* lies in Tomkins' careful navigation of the conceptual space "between two and infinity," I would add that Tomkins also shifts between weak and strong modes of theory making in ways that would inevitably characterize any theory of sexuality developed out of his work.

The claim that affects have more motivational significance than drives, for instance, is a strong claim that requires Tomkins—as I have shown in Chapter One—to insistently reframe discussions of the drive around affect instead. The additional stipulation that sexuality is primarily affective likewise requires a strong insistence on re-reading sexuality in Tomkinsian terms, on always reducing sexuality to affect. In Chapter Two, for example, the affective readings of fetish newsletters from the Kinsey Institute were primarily offered in a straightforwardly evidentiary mode, in an attempt to prove

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[22] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 23.
[23] Love, "Truth," 238.

"the assumptions with which [I] began"[24] in Chapter One. But the crucial difference in strength between an affective theory of sexuality and a drive-foundational theory of sexuality is that a drive-foundational sexuality reduces a "wide spectrum of phenomena" to a single "common source"[25] whereas an affective theory of sexuality can bring that same wide spectrum of phenomena into contact with a dynamic, transformational system of nine primary affects that is neither completely unbounded nor rigidly unilinear. In other words, an affective theory of sexuality does not use "inconceivably coarse axes of categorization" to sort human behavior but rather uses a finely gradated and "finitely many"[26] system to explore it in its full "descriptive richness."[27]An affective theory of sexuality requires strong claims to come into existence, but once those claims are proven, it can operate weakly, with a loose, almost nonce-y quality that can be applied meaningfully to the range of phenomena brought under its purview.

Another way of putting this is that drive-foundational theories of sexuality must operate in a strong register in which all forms of sexual variation are reduced to the variations of a single unifying principle. Homosexuality? Something must have happened to the sex drive. Fetishism? Something must have happened to the sex drive. As I noted via Foucault in the Introduction, too, the generalization of the drive or sexual instinct to encompass all abnormal behavior means that this same answer begins to be offered in the late nineteenth century to all questions about deviance and criminality: Burglary? Something must have happened to the sex drive. And although the deeply taxonomic sexological literature on sexual fetishism reviewed in the Introduction does indeed seem,

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[24] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 14.
[25] Tomkins, *Affect*, 519.
[26] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 15.
[27] Love, "Truth," 237.

at first glance, to contain some of the rich nonce-y resources that Sedgwick initially spies in psychoanalysis, its exploration of fetishism is also strongly "tautological"[28]; this literature seems primarily concerned with proving the conceptual viability of the drive or sexual instinct and establishing the relative power of each theorist's framework to maintain a "wide reach and rigorous exclusiveness"[29] over the field of sexuality as a whole. As I argued in the Introduction via Foucault, too, it is not the case that drive-foundational theories of sexuality begin with this handful of principles and apply them but rather that they require perceived forms of sexual variation—and especially sexual fetishism as the "model perversion"[30]—in order to be constructed in the first place.

An affective theory of sexuality, on the other hand, is strong in its insistence on thinking through sexual variation in affective terms but weak once this initial bar has been cleared. Sexual fetishism? It must be affective. But *how*? What affects have been affixed to which objects or affects? How many variations of affective curves are realized and, indeed, possible? What affects have been activated and in what sequence? One of the trademarks of weak theory is that it is primarily descriptive in orientation, that it asks more questions than it can answer, that it expands its objects and magnifies them rather than reducing them to abstractions. In the previous chapter, I attempted to model the potential weakness of an affective theory of sexuality: with a system of nine primary affects to work with—rather than, say, a unitary drive—I attempted to engage with the material alternatingly in a strong mode of proving the viability of an affective theory of sexuality and in an "unhurried, undefensive, theoretically galvanized practice of close

[28] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 14.
[29] Ibid., 14.
[30] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 154.

reading"[31] with the same varied bodies of literature or, as Sedgwick and Frank might put it, "pockets of terrain."[32]

An affective theory of sexuality, too—as I have shown in the previous two chapters—also performs some of the same shoulder shrugging characteristic of weak theory. Because an affective theory of sexuality considers the field of human behavior that has been demarcated as sexuality to be consubstantial with the affects of interest and excitement, it does not contain strong tools for setting sexuality apart as a unique and exceptional field of human behavior, nor for drawing harsh dividing lines between forms of sexuality that have been deemed "normal" and those that have been deemed "perverse." Where strong, drive-foundational theories are so concerned with shoring up their own power that they deploy a single motivational principle unique to the field of human sexuality (the drive or sexual instinct), a weaker, affective theory of sexuality can analyze sexuality within a system of affects that does not rely on the "automatism"[33] of that principle to account for sexual variation.

Indeed, an affective theory of sexuality is less fixated on whether or not behaviors are properly described as sexual in the first place and more concerned with tracing the affective curves of behaviors like fetishism that have historically been articulated as sexual exclusively within drive-foundational theories of sexuality. And whereas strong, drive-foundational theories are fixated on dividing human behavior—particularly sexual behavior—into categories of normality and abnormality, these terms have little meaning within an affective theory of sexuality, which can regard a seemingly atypical sexual object as just *another* object to which the radically flexible "excitement affect can be

[31] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 23.
[32] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 28.
[33] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 282.

emitted."[34] When it must be reduced to and understood through a concept of a drive or sexual instinct, a phenomenon like fetishism does seem to be "quite specially remarkable"[35] as Freud finds it, but when it can be analyzed using a weak yet richly descriptive Tomkinsian theory of sexuality, fetishism is rendered unexceptional, even mundane from that perspective.

It is perhaps bitterly ironic, then, that feminist and queer theory, in their scant treatment of fetishism—as well as in their more thorough treatment of the broader category of perversion—have continued to position sexual variation as exceptional and even pathological, a stance that reveals an implicit commitment to strong theories of sexuality rooted in the notion of a drive or sexual instinct. In a sense, the absence of a weak engagement with sexual fetishism in feminist and queer theory may be the best barometer of those fields' continued commitment to perpetuating the category of perversion. In other words, if feminist and queer theory analyzed sexuality through the lens of a weak, affective theory that can perceive forms of sexual variation as unremarkable, then they would lose access to the perceived political and rhetorical value provided by the category perversion. I want to suggest in the next section of this chapter that the lack of a more descriptive approach to fetishism has been a telling blind spot in feminist and queer studies and that this blind spot has been the tacit result of these fields' underlying commitments to the rhetorical force of the strong, drive-foundational theories of sexuality on which they have been built.

Messy Thickness

[34] Tomkins, *Affect*, 31.
[35] Freud, "Three Essays," 105.

In her 1994 interview with Judith Butler in the journal *differences*, Gayle Rubin expresses her frustration with the "common presumption that psychoanalysis was the privileged site for interpreting differences of sexual conduct"[36] within feminist and queer theory at the time, noting that "much of the psychoanalytic approach to sexual variation, also known as perversion, struck [her] as incredibly reductionist and over-simplified."[37] In other words, Rubin, much like Sedgwick did in *Epistemology of the Closet*, perceived the way in which strong psychoanalytic theories of sexuality "sleeked down"[38] the field of sexuality to a few principles. Rubin's chief example of a form of sexual variation that has been ill-served by this approach is, notably, sexual fetishism. She quips:

> For example, to look at something like fetishism and say it has to do with castration and the lack, or maybe it's the knowledge of castration, or maybe it's the denial of the knowledge of castration, or maybe it is the foreclosure of the knowledge of, or the displacement of the knowledge … well, it says very little to me about fetishism. When I think about fetishism I want to know many other things.[39]

Rubin proceeds to gesture toward a potential historical, social, and anthropological study of fetishism in order to combat the broader "trend" of "[analyzing] sexual variance by mixing a few privileged 'theoretical' texts with literary or film criticism to produce statements about either the thing … or the population."[40] Indeed, if feminist and queer studies have refrained from more robust engagements with fetishism—and they have—it has likely been due, in part, to the fact that the drive-foundational theories found in those privileged texts seem strong enough, widely applicable enough, and self-proving enough to deploy them without getting one's hands dirty in the details that a weaker theory of

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[36] Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, "Interview: Sexual Traffic," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2/3 (1994): 62-99.
[37] Ibid., 78.
[38] Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 24.
[39] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 78.
[40] Ibid., 93

sexuality can approach more intimately. And the details of sexuality are precisely what have been foreclosed by the strong theories of a drive or sexual instinct that come packaged with psychoanalytic theory. As Rubin adds: "[W]hen I wanted to think about sexual diversity, psychoanalytic approaches seemed less interesting to me. They seemed prone to impoverish the rich complexity of erotic meaning and conduct."[41]

Rubin's comments to Butler here do not exactly mirror but certainly recall Foucault's argument in *Abnormal*—which I also outlined in the Introduction—that, under current theoretical models for the study of sexuality, "representations, passions, and affects have secondary, derivative, or subordinate status" relative to "impulses, drives, tendencies, inclinations, and automatisms."[42] They also evoke Foucault's remarks in the 1982 interview that sexual behavior is not just a matter of repression and drives but also "the consciousness one has of what one is doing, what one makes of the experience, and the value one attaches to it."[43] Foucault has the distinct sense that affect has been drained from drive-based approaches to human behavior. And Rubin's comments also mirror, or at least fall in parallel with Lynne Huffer's contention—discussed in the Introduction as well—that queer theory has historically relied on "infamously ungraspable conception of sexuality,"[44] especially in the "Freudo-Foucauldianism of queer theory's beginnings" of which Rubin herself was a part.[45] There is a sense that something—whether it is the "rich complexity of erotic meaning"[46] or the "messy thickness of erotic life"—has been difficult to articulate within feminist and queer theoretical approaches to sexuality, and this has perhaps especially been borne out in the case of fetishism. In the preceding two

[41] Ibid., 79.
[42] Foucault, *Abnormal*, 131.
[43] Foucault, "Sexual Choice," 141-142.
[44] Huffer, *Mad*, 36.
[45] Ibid.,, 172.
[46] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 79.

chapters, I have made the case that the resources of Silvan Tomkins' theory of affect can be used to approach this "messy thickness of erotic life" provided that strong, drive-foundational theories of sexuality can be decentered. If we take seriously Tomkins' claim that the "primary motivational system is the affective system, and the biological drives have motivational impact only when amplified by the affective system,"[47] then it is no surprise that the drive-foundational approaches to sexuality within feminist and queer theory have felt "sapped" or even "evacuated"[48] of something essential.

In this chapter, however, I want to go so far as to claim that feminist and queer theory's continued reliance on strong, drive-foundational approaches to sexual fetishism has enabled those two fields to leave the category of perversion intact while pushing the affective contours of sexuality to the side. The lack of contemporary feminist and queer work on sexual fetishism is especially conspicuous when compared to emerging feminist and queer sub-disciplines of the last thirty years. Consider that ten years prior to her interview with Judith Butler, Gayle Rubin identified what she termed "the most despised sexual castes" in her classic essay "Thinking Sex": "transsexuals, transvestites, fetishists, sadomasochists, [and] sex workers."[49] Over three decades later, it is noteworthy that sexual fetishism alone seems to have been left underexamined within both the feminist theory that gave birth to "Thinking Sex" and the queer theory that, as Heather Love notes, it helped create alongside the pathmaking works of Judith Butler, David Halperin, Eve Sedgwick and Teresa de Lauretis.[50] Transgender studies is a quickly emerging field

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[47] Tomkins, *Affect*, 4.
[48] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 74.
[49] Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 12.
[50] Heather Love, "Introduction: Rethinking Sex," *GLQ* 17, no. 1 (2010): 1-14.

that is now on its second recognized anthology under the direction of Susan Stryker.[51] BDSM, which was then at the heart of the feminist sex wars, has since achieved its status as a canonical object of study within queer studies, thanks both to Rubin's own enterprising anthropological work in the San Francisco leather scene[52] and Margot Weiss' notable ethnographic work in contemporary BDSM scenes.[53] Sex work has also been recuperated and studied within feminist theory.[54] But whither fetishism?

This question is not intended to point out a gap in the literature that must be filled for its own sake nor is it to suggest that fetishists themselves are a criminally ignored minority that must receive identitarian forms of recognition within academe. Nor do I want to echo the sexological and psychoanalytic theories of sexuality by claiming that sexual fetishism is an exceptional form of sexuality that is worthy of scholarly interest simply because of its atypicality. I do intend, however, to call into question the reasons *why* sexual fetishism, in particular, has remained a blind spot within feminist and queer work. The premier journals in these fields—*GLQ*, *differences*, *Signs*—are devoid of dedicated work on sexual fetishism. Ellen McCallum's 1995 article "How to Do Things with Fetishism,"[55] later expanded into a book, comes closest to exploring the topic in a thorough way and, even then, it participates in precisely the sort of lazy application of a psychoanalytic fetish narrative that Rubin calls out in her 1994 interview. The 1993 collection *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, which has roots in queer studies via its

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[51] Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[52] Rubin, *Deviations*.
[53] See, e.g., Margot D. Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
[54] See, e.g., Elizabeth Bernstein, *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[55] E.L. McCallum, "How to Do Things with Fetishism," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 7, no. 3 (1995): 24-59.

editors Emily Apter and William Pietz,[56] explores fetishism more broadly conceived in its full anthropological, philosophical, and psychoanalytic context without zeroing in on sexual fetishism in particular. Overall, sexual fetishism's absence in the fields that have arguably been the most concerned with human sexuality is certainly a conspicuous one.

This absence of sexual fetishism within feminist and queer studies is even more peculiar in light of the fact that it remains a vibrant object of study and debate outside of these fields. Fashion studies and cultural studies have both recently turned to fetishism.[57] And leading up to the recent publication of the DSM-V, contemporary psychiatry has been struggling to define, redefine, and categorize the sizable taxonomical field of "sexual paraphilias," an umbrella term that describes atypical sexual behavior, including most forms of sexual fetishism.[58] The American Psychiatric Association may have removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973 but, in 2015, the proliferation of perversions is continuing unabated in the case of sexual fetishism, with some degree of pushback from those scholars who want to remove paraphilias from the DSM altogether.[59] The first thorough online ethnography of the adult baby and diaper lover (ABDL) community, too, was not published under the purview of queer studies, but rather in an article in the sexological journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior* that essentially judges whether or not this population warrants a clinical diagnosis based on this ethnographic data.[60]Although the authors conclude that "ABDL

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[56] Emily Apter and William Pietz, eds. *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
[57] See, e.g., Steele, *Fetish*.
[58] See, e.g., Martin P. Kafka, "The DSM Diagnostic Criteria for Fetishism," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39 (2010): 357-362,
[59] Charles Moser, "DSM-IV-TR and the Paraphilias: An Argument for Removal," *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality* 17 no. 3/4 (2005): 91-109.
[60] Kaitlyn Hawkinson and Brian D. Zamboni, "Adult Baby/Diaper Lovers: An Exploratory Study of an Online Community Sample," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43 (2014): 863-867.

behavior … is not problematic for most of its participants,"[61] they are nonetheless more concerned with its "contributions for clinical work and research,"[62] than they are with exploring the rich descriptive data that they gathered from their study.

The centrality of—or at least the lip service paid to—Foucault within both feminist and queer studies casts even more suspicion on the absence of work on sexual fetishism within these fields. As I discussed in the Introduction, Foucault identifies fetishism as "the model perversion" or "the guiding thread for analyzing all the other deviations"[63] and it seems clear from *Volume One* that sexual fetishism plays a crucial role in the development of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct. Challenging normative concepts of sexuality, then, would seem to require critical work on sexual fetishism in particular and yet sexual fetishism seems to be one of the most impoverished areas of study within feminist and queer work. What accounts for its absence? Is this merely a matter of circumstance or are there deeper disciplinary commitments at play? How might a refusal to engage with the details of fetishism also enable the perpetuation of strong theories of sexuality, the same theories of sexuality that are often more concerned with the seeming abnormality of various forms of sexual behavior than they are with its felt meanings?

Possible reasons for the absence of fetishism as an established object of study within feminist and queer studies include, most saliently, the idea that it is a phenomenon that primarily occurs among heterosexual men. As Annette Schlichter notes, "the queer critique of sexual normativity is both bound to the history of specific identities and

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[61] Ibid., 863.
[62] Ibid., 876.
[63] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 154.

committed to the destabilization of sexual identities."[64] Feminist and queer studies have grown up around certain identities—woman, lesbian, gay, queer—as well as the attempts to destabilize those identities. At a cursory glance, it might seem as if fetishism has no place in these projects. Freud has powerfully imbued sexuality studies with the impression that fetishism is a uniquely heterosexual and male structure—as Marjorie Garber summarizes, "according to Freud, men have perversions, women have neuroses"[65]—and it is not until the work of psychoanalyst George Zavitzianos in the 1970s and 1980s that the possibility of female fetishism begins to be considered in psychoanalytic theory.[66] Even for Zavitzianos, female fetishism is rare because most heterosexual women, in his account, either masturbate or reclaim men's penises to fill the customary place of the fetish.[67] This conception of fetishism as a primarily heterosexual male phenomenon is an enduring one and, indeed, as I will discuss further below, it is the genderedness of fetishism that has been one of the primary focuses within feminist work on the subject. But this conception of fetishism as a heterosexual male phenomenon is also a thoroughly outmoded one. As shown in the previous chapter, late twentieth-century newsletters like *DPF*, *Brief Notes, Brief Tales*, and the *Foot Fraternity* all had a sizable gay male readership. And while some fetishes do seem to be particularly divided along gender lines—the aforementioned online ethnography of the online ABDL community

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[64] Annette Schlichter, "Queer at Last?: Straight Intellectuals and the Desire for Transgression," *GLQ* 10, no. 4 (2004): 545.
[65] Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 119.
[66] George Zavitzianos, "The Perversion of Fetishism in Women," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1982): 405-425.
[67] Ibid., 423.

collected data from 1,795 men and only 139 women[68]—other online fetish communities, such as SneezeFetishForum.org (SFF) have a sizable female presence.

Not only does sexual fetishism intersect with the classic identities around which queer and feminist studies have been developed, but I might also go so far suggest that an interrogation of sexual fetishism may be even more crucial in some ways to a radical "critique of sexual normativity"[69] than an interrogation of homosexuality. It is fetishism, after all, and not homosexuality, that Foucault identifies as "the model perversion" in which the idea of a drive or sexual instinct can be "manifested, more clearly than anywhere else."[70] It is fetishism, too, that constitutes one of the "four major forms" that established the very "notion of 'sex'"—the other three are "hysteria, onanism … and interrupted coition."[71] And, as I briefly suggested in the Introduction, although the birth of the homosexual as a medical subspecies"[72] plays a distinctive role in the deployment of sexuality and the proliferation of perversions beginning in the late nineteenth century, homosexuality bears a less constitutive relationship to the concept of a drive or sexual instinct than does fetishism. As Foucault observes in his famous passage on the historical birth of homosexuality:

> We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.[73]

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[68] Hawkinson and Zamboni, "Adult Baby/Diaper Lovers," 863.
[69] Schlichter, "Queer," 545.
[70] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 154.
[71] Ibid., 154.
[72] Ibid., 101.
[73] Ibid., 43.

Indeed, homosexuality is initially theorized not as a "type of sexual relations" or a deviation of an instinct from its natural course but rather as an "inversion" of one's gender; the problem of homosexuality, then, lies in the source of the instinct and not necessarily the instinct itself. Fetishism, on the other hand, plays a critical role in the development of the concept of a drive or sexual instinct as well as the deployment of that instinct across all of human behavior. All this is not to suggest, of course, that the focus on analyzing and destabilizing the production of gay and lesbian identities within feminist and queer studies has been a misguided project so much as it is to note that the place of sexual fetishism in the production of sexual normativity has been left to the side.

But this relative ignorance of fetishism—whether willful or otherwise—has played a strategic role in the maintenance of strong, drive-foundational currents of sexual normativity within feminist and queer studies themselves. In other words, feminist and queer studies may not have produced dedicated work on sexual fetishism but they have certainly invoked it, relying on its perceived abnormality, atypicality, and transgressiveness—all supposed qualities of fetishism that would have no meaning within a weaker affective theory of sexuality—in order to accomplish certain illocutionary aims. As the "model perversion" and as one of the "four major forms" gives rise to the "notion of 'sex,'"[74] sexual fetishism is like the keystone of the modern concept of sexuality; if removed, broken down, and analyzed, the entire structure would collapse. By leaving sexual fetishism intact, and opting to leverage its connotations of perversion instead, feminist and queer theory preserve the structure of sexuality for rhetorical purposes.

[74] Ibid., 154.

Broadly speaking, whereas feminist theory once relied on the perceived perversity of fetishism in order to condemn certain ways of thinking and modes of looking, feminist and queer theory have both since embraced perversion for its perceived transgressive political value. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to trace these trends through several classic texts in each field before observing, in the conclusion of this chapter, that these methods of deploying fetishism for persuasive ends rely on a strong and implicit concept of a drive and, as such, would be conceptually void if we accepted the primacy of affect within a weak theory of human sexuality.

Perverse Attachments

The stated aim of Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"—the groundbreaking 1975 essay that formed an initial foundation for the field of feminist film theory—is to use psychoanalytic theory as "a political weapon"[75] because the satisfaction of the male viewer's gaze "must be attacked." For Mulvey, analyzing the pleasure of the male gaze "destroys" it and "[t]hat is the intention of [the] article."[76] Mulvey's oft-cited essay applies a Freudian analysis to the films of Alfred Hitchock and Josef von Sternberg in order to argue that the conventions of mainstream cinema—including cinematography, narrative structure, and the format of the screening itself—are scopophilic, voyeuristic, and, indeed, fetishistic in nature. In sum, Mulvey identifies a "determining"[77] and "controlling male gaze"[78] at the heart of the cinema.

I begin with Mulvey's essay here because it is one of the first and most widely-read pieces of feminist criticism to deploy a concept of sexual fetishism for rhetorical

[75] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16, no. 3 (1975): 6.
[76] Ibid., 8.
[77] Ibid., 11.
[78] Ibid., 15.

means. Mulvey argues that the male spectator, when presented with an onscreen "female figure"[79] experiences castration anxiety and must resort to perverse strategies in order to reconcile the image. In Mulvey's view, one of these strategies is "complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous."[80] She observes that this strategy, which she terms "fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself."[81] For Mulvey, the "fetish" functions as the bridge between the equivalence she draws between analysis and destruction, between describing the male gaze and destroying it; indeed, it marks the moment where she expects the reader to impute that the "male gaze" is inherently dangerous because it is fetishistic—because fetishism still carries with it the same pejorative connotations of "savagery" and "primitiveness" that accompanied its original historical development. As Bruno Latour notes in *Critical Inquiry*, "many social scientists … associate criticism with antifetishism,"[82] or, simply put, "[w]e explain the objects we don't approve of by treating them as fetishes."[83] He continues with thick sarcasm:

> Do you see now why it feels so good to be a critical mind? You are always right! When naïve believers are clinging forcefully to their objects, claiming that they are made to do things because of their gods, their poetry, their cherished objects, you can turn all of those attachments into so many fetishes and humiliate all the believers by showing that it is nothing but their own projection, that you, yes you alone, can see.[84]

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[79] Ibid., 13.
[80] Ibid., 13-14.
[81] Ibid., 14.
[82] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?: From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 237.
[83] Ibid., 241.
[84] Ibid., 239.

But in the specific context of feminist theory, the anti-fetishistic orientation of criticism takes on a more gendered connotation. As Rubin details in her interview with Butler:

> By the late 1970s, almost every sexual variation was described somewhere in feminist literature in negative terms with a feminist rationalization. Transsexuality, male homosexuality, promiscuity, public sex, transvestism, fetishism, and sadomasochism were all vilified within a feminist rhetoric, and some causal primacy in the creation and maintenance of female subordination was attributed to each of them. Somehow, these poor sexual deviations were suddenly the ultimate expressions of patriarchal domination.[85]

In Mulvey's article, the fetishistic quality of the filmic gaze stands doubly condemned, both because it is fetishistic and because fetishism necessarily connotes maleness which, in turn, means power. Mulvey buys into the way in which drive-foundational theories of sexuality position fetishism as pathological in order to bring that same pathologization to bear on the male pleasure in viewing. In so doing, she tells us quite a bit about the cinema but, as Rubin might say, "very little … about fetishism."[86] Indeed, fetishism amounts to little more than a tool for Mulvey's argument, wielded precisely if implicitly for its designation as abnormal within drive-foundational theories of sexuality.

In her argument against sexual objectification, Catharine MacKinnon also invokes the specter of fetishism for illocutionary aims. For MacKinnon, the sexual objectification of women is the partial result of an inherently male form of fetishism that reduces women's bodies to mere commodities. In her classic 1982 *Signs* essay "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State," it is clear, too, that MacKinnon is using a muddied and generalized definition of fetishism—leveraging its Marxist and Freudian connotations—in order to condemn what she perceives as the all-encompassing and inescapable

[85] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 76-77.
[86] Ibid., 78.

ontology[87] of female degradation. In one passage, an analogy to commodity fetishism appears:

> Like the value of a commodity, women's sexual desirability is fetishized: it is made to appear a quality of the object itself, spontaneous and inherent, independent of the social relation which creates it, uncontrolled by the force that requires it.[88]

But earlier in the essay, MacKinnon couches her understanding of fetishism in the psychoanalytic and psychological language of paraphilia, narcissism, and masochism:

> Women's infantilization evokes pedophilia; fixation on dismembered body parts (the breast man, the leg man) evokes fetishism; idolization of vapidity, necrophilia. Narcissism insures that woman identifies with that image of herself that man holds up… Masochism means that pleasure in violation becomes her sensuality.[89]

Most cryptically, MacKinnon claims that "[t]he fetish speaks feminism," which, in context, can be taken to mean that the male fetishization of women encourages them to subject themselves to the fetishism of male sexuality in order to properly "become" women—indeed, that fetishism-cum-objectification helps to constitute the "material reality of women's lives."[90]

For MacKinnon, as for Mulvey, fetishism functions on a rhetorical level as a self-evident wrong. Both of these authors present the fetishistic heterosexual male approach to women—whether they are construed as filmic or real world objects—as structurally irrational and innately deviant. Male fetishism is articulated as Marxist in some contexts, Freudian in others, but always as inherently suspect and unethical. In MacKinnon, a fictive wholeness of desire is implicitly positioned as virtuous while fetishism is rendered

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[87] Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory," *Signs* 7 (1982): 538.
[88] Ibid., 540.
[89] Ibid., 530.
[90] Ibid., 539.

gruesome through the grotesque language of dismemberment. The mapping of desire onto female bodies is likewise presented as inherently illogical because it is not "a quality of the object itself,"[91] as if desire *could* somehow naturally emanate from bodies and beings apart from social systems. It is not the case, of course, that Mulvey and MacKinnon's arguments about objectification—whether in film or in the social world more broadly—are completely groundless or politically inexpedient, but rather that both rely on the inherently pejorative connotations of the term "fetish" in order to make a moral and, indeed, pathologizing argument. Their underlying points are often valid but the historical weight of fetishism's pejorative connotation is left to do the legwork. As I discussed in the Introduction, the term "fetish" has typically been used to describe a disjuncture of value within "the encounter of radically heterogeneous social systems."[92] In most of its historical contexts, the term has been applied by a group with more social power—Portuguese traders, Enlightenment-era intellectuals, sexologists—onto a group with less social power—the inhabitants of the Guinea Coast, African cultures more broadly, patients, criminals. In this context, MacKinnon and Mulvey's enthusiastic use of fetishism in a critical mode can be read as a rhetorical attempt to reverse a power relation, to assume the privileged position of the distanced, objective "critical mind"[93] and to portray objectification and the male gaze as irrational and deviant.

Although this feminist use of fetishism in a pathologizing register continues post-Mulvey and MacKinnon, [94] feminist theory quickly moves into debates over the genderedness of fetishism that nonetheless tend to leave the "messy thickness" of

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[91] Ibid., 540.
[92] Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish I," 7.
[93] Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?," 239.
[94] See, e.g. Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouseTM* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 144-147.

fetishism itself untouched. In the 1980s and 1990s, some feminist scholars attempt to "elaborate theories of female fetishism" whereas others reject the Freudian narrative of fetishism as irreparably misogynistic.[95] During this time, Teresa de Lauretis, Naomi Schor, Elizabeth Grosz, Heather Findlay, and Anne McClintock all stake various claims for lesbian and/or female fetishism as a way to challenge fetishism's exclusive association with men in Freud's work. Schor notes that "female fetishism is, in the rhetoric of psychoanalysis, an oxymoron" but nonetheless locates female fetishism—almost exclusively via citations of Freud—in certain literary scenes in the novels of George Sand.[96] With regards to fetishism, Schor's work typifies the "trend" Rubin identified of "[analyzing] sexual variance by mixing a few privileged 'theoretical' texts with literary … criticism."[97] Grosz likewise relies on Freud and Schor to theorize the figure of the masculine lesbian as a fetishist by arguing that her more feminine lover fills the place of the phallus.[98] Based on this close reading of Freud, Grosz argues that lesbianism can be a form of sexual fetishism, that is to say she makes a statement about "the thing"[99]—as Rubin would put it—without substantially engaging with it outside of a psychoanalytic register. If anything, Grosz, like de Lauretis,[100] approaches lesbian fetishism as an exercise in "stretch[ing] the limits of psychoanalytic theory"[101] as Nikki Sullivan puts it, as more of a political statement about the gendered nature of psychoanalytic theory than an attempt to understand the phenomenon of fetishism.

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[95] Naomi Schor, "Fetishism," in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, ed. Elizabeth Wright (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 115.
[96] Naomi Schor, "Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand," *Poetics Today* 6 (1985): 303.
[97] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 93.
[98] Elizabeth Grosz, "Lesbian Fetishism," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991): 39-54.
[99] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 93.
[100] Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).
[101] Sullivan, *Introduction*, 184.

Most other notable feminist work on fetishism from this time forward cannot escape the orbit of the question of fetishism's genderedness. Heather Findlay, for example, thinks through lesbian debates surrounding dildo use under the rubric of fetishism, arguing that these debates involve the same act of Freudian disavowal that characterizes fetishism: lesbians know that they are using objects that are "shaped like penises" and yet they disavow their verisimilitude.[102] Anne McClintock similarly challenges the presumed masculinity of Freudian and Lacanian understandings of sexual fetishism.[103] It is also noteworthy that these attempts to claim fetishism within feminist theory were met with a degree of pushback from feminist scholars who, like, Mulvey, buy into the pathologizing connotations that adhere to fetishism. In 1990, for instance, Marjorie Garber, argues that "the ideology of the fetish is the ideology of phallocentrism"[104] and as such it should have no role in feminist or lesbian thought. Garber even goes so far as to title her article on this subject "fetish envy," mocking what she sees as a then-fashionable feminist attitude that, if men have fetishism, then "we should have it [too]."[105] While Garber breaks with her colleagues in terms of political strategy, then, she nonetheless conceptually relies on the same basic Freudian template for fetishism that underlies all of these scholarly entries in fetishism's fifteen minutes of fame within feminist theory. Indeed, whether for or against female fetishism, this feminist work on the subject tells us quite a bit about the politics of psychoanalytic theory but it, once again, tells us "very little … about fetishism."[106] In fact, it seems to target

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[102] Heather Findlay, "Freud's 'Fetishism' and the Lesbian Dildo Debates," *Feminist Studies* 18 (1992): 564.
[103] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[104] Marjorie Garber, "Fetish Envy," *October* 54 (1990): 46.
[105] Ibid., 45.
[106] Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic," 76-77.

fetishism as the ground for this feminist use of psychoanalytic theory precisely *because* of its perceived status as an extreme form of perverse sexuality.

This same relish in inhabiting marginal forms of sexuality—a relish that relies on a strong, drive-foundational understanding of fetishism as the prime example of a distinct sexual force gone awry—can be traced in queer theory's continuing engagement with fetishism and the category of perversion more broadly. Queer theory remains relatively quiet on the specifics of fetishism but it has, as I noted via James Penney in the Introduction, "placed [its emphasis] overwhelmingly on the critique of the way perversion … has been used to pathologize particular sexual practices."[107] But queer theory, I would add, has also historically engaged with fetishistic and other perverse forms of sexuality in a quite different register, one that embraces their pathologization in order to position them as radically counter-normative. In other words, queer theory, like Mulvey, works *with* rather than against the pathologization of fetishism but for very different political purposes. Given my reading of erotic vomiting in Chapter Two, it seems only fitting that I begin a survey of classic queer approaches to fetishism and perversion more broadly conceived with Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's foundational 1998 essay "Sex in Public" which concludes with a reflection on an extended scene of the practice.

Even Berlant and Warner—who are familiar enough with what they might term "queer sex practices" that such acts as "spanking, flagellation, shaving, branding, laceration, bondage, humiliation, [and] wrestling" are consigned to the realm of "the

[107] James Penney, *The World of Perversion*, *173*.

usual"[108]—initially regard erotic vomiting as an exotic activity, one that is fascinating and repulsive all at once:

> This night, word was circulating that the performance was to be erotic vomiting. This sounded like an appetite spoiler, and the thought of leaving early occurred to us but was overcome by a simple curiosity: what would the foreplay be like? Let's stay until it gets messy. Then we can leave.[109]

Berlant and Warner do stay and watch as a "boy, twentyish, very skateboard" sits in a chair, head tilted upward, as the top "begins pouring milk down the boy's throat, then food" until he begins to convulse:

> It is at this point that we realize we cannot leave, cannot even look away. No one can. The crowd is transfixed by the scene of intimacy and display, control and abandon, ferocity and abjection. People are moaning softly with admiration, then whistling, stomping, screaming encouragements. They have pressed forward in a compact and intimate group. Finally, as the top inserts two, then three fingers in the bottom's throat, insistently offering his own stomach for the repeated climaxes, we realize that we have never seen such a display of trust and violation. We are breathless.[110]

It is hard not to feel the intensity and peculiarity of their interest in this declaration of breathlessness. Freud writes of fetishism that "no other variation of the sexual instinct that borders on the pathological can lay so much claim to our interest as this one"[111] and here, we can sense that Berlant and Warner have been captivated by erotic vomiting in a way that the BDSM acts they reference no longer can.

In the broader structure of "Sex in Public," too, this closing anecdote functions as a gateway into the sweeping final gesture of the essay, which ruminates on "scenes where sex appears more sublime than narration itself, neither redemptive nor transgressive, moral nor immoral, hetero nor homo, nor sutured to any axis of social legitimation."

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[108] Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 564.
[109] Ibid., 564.
[110] Ibid., 565.
[111] Freud, "Three Essays," 153.

Berlant and Warner contend that "sex opens a wedge to the transformation of … social norms"[112] and erotic vomiting, in essence, constitutes their closing argument. But in a weak affective theory of sexuality, erotic vomiting would be no more transformative than the missionary position. By implicitly relying on the seeming abnormality of erotic vomiting, Berlant and Warner position the perceived distance between the normal and the perverse as a realm of political possibility. They tell us a lot about the political utility of erotic vomiting as rhetorical "scene" but less about erotic vomiting itself than even, say, the decidedly heteronormative psychoanalytic scholar Robert Stoller.

This closing gesture of "Sex in Public" has since been echoed across queer considerations of perversion more broadly speaking and I will consider a handful of representative cases across the last three decades here. Indeed, although queer theory does not articulate theories of fetishism, as the "chief perversion," it has an important if implicit place in queer theories of perversion. In his *Homos*, for example, Leo Bersani argues for a concept of homosexual specificity in the fact of the anti-identitarian projects of feminist and queer theory, but in order to do so, he develops a concept of "homo-ness" that leans heavily on the perceived transgressiveness of seemingly perverse sexual activity. He notably expresses admiration for the way in which French novelist Jean Genet "repeats society's accusation of him as a homosexual outlaw, meticulously seeking out every ramification, every implication of that accusation (much as his tongue industriously and lovingly sweeps up the waste around his lover's anus."[113] In addition to his grandiloquent description of rimming, too, Bersani argues that "there is something salubriously perverse, especially today, in [Genet's] refusal to argue for any moral value

[112] Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 565.
[113] Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 161.

whatsoever in homosexuality."[114] Indeed, Bersani is not so much interested in "defend[ing]" homosexuality through an appeal to "polymorphously perverse sexuality"[115] as he is in relying on the strength of the concept of perversion to position homosexuality as a radical "*anti*communitarian"[116] force. Bersani's work on Genet tells us a lot about his political attitudes toward a heterosexual-dominated culture but not so much about the sexual practices he valorizes.

Bersani's tradition of locating political possibility in some form of radical queer perversion persists for at least a decade post-*Homos*. In 1996, Robert Reid-Pharr also locates political potential in perversion, particularly as it intersects with queer blackness. Reid-Pharr reads Piri Thomas' focus on waste in his memoir *Down These Mean Streets* as "evidence of the non-productive, perverse nature of the (homo)sexual act."[117] He argues, too, that "we must point to that which is unauthentic, based and perverse in order to adequately define the borders of Black 'realness.'"[118] But rather than collapsing the category of perversion or questioning its founding logic, Reid-Pharr advocates for the political possibilities of perversion and abjection: "… in the process of traveling through the underworld, the muck, the feces that is represented by the Black homosexual, we are able to access, if only briefly, new modes of understanding and existence that seem to wait just beyond our grasp."[119] Like Berlant, Warner and Bersani then, Reid-Pharr finds some sort of political transformation—"new modes of understanding" as he puts it—in the concept of perverse sexuality.

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[114] Ibid., 161.
[115] Ibid., 36.
[116] Ibid., 54.
[117] Robert F. Reid-Pharr, "Tearing the Goat's Flesh: Homosexuality, Abjection and the Production of a Late Twentieth-Century Black Masculinity," *Studies in the Novel* 28, no. 3 (1996): 381.
[118] Ibid., 393.
[119] Ibid., 393.

In 2004, Lee Edleman's *No Future* places a capstone on—but does not altogether end—the tradition of deploying perversity, abjection, and anti-communitarianism as a political possibility. Much like the Bersani of *Homos*, Edelman wants to claim negativity as the province of homosexuality or, as he calls it, "sinthomosexuality."[120] He claims: "Rather than rejecting, with liberal discourse, this ascription of negativity to the queer, we might, as I argue, do better to consider accepting and even embracing it."[121] For Edelman, this embrace of negativity requires a refusal of the figure of the Child, which he sees as the center of an ideology of reproductive futurism. And he tellingly conceives of this refusal as the "appropriately perverse refusal that characterizes queer theory."[122] Whether figured as "salubrious" or "appropriate," then, both Bersani and Edelman draw rhetorical strength from the perverse, a category which would have no meaning inside a weak theory of human sexuality.

In considering the ways in which these feminist and queer theories of fetishism and perversion seem more concerned with the political consequences of deviant sexuality than with describing its contours, it is noteworthy that they do not escape the logic of what Michel Foucault would term a "reverse discourse."[123] In *Volume One*, Foucault notes that the deployment of the category of perversion within drive-foundational theories of sexuality is also flexible enough to encompass even projects that attempt to thwart that very categorization, so long as they continue to use the same conceptual terminology:

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[120] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death* Drive (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 33.
[121] Ibid., 4.
[122] Ibid., 4.
[123] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 101.

> There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphrodism" made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity"; but it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.[124]

A classic example of reverse discourse, then, would be to insist that homosexuality or fetishism are just as "normal" as normal sexuality. But although the feminist and queer theories of fetishism and perversion reviewed above do not participate in this classic style of reverse discourse, they nonetheless insistently use "the same vocabulary" and "the same categories" handed to them by the normative deployment of sexuality that Foucault painstakingly details. Grosz, de Lauretis, Schor, and McClintock insist that women can be just as fetishistic as men, and call for this fact to be "acknowledged" using the same Freudian vocabulary that originally excluded women from theoretical considerations of fetishism. Berlant, Warner, Bersani, Reid-Pharr, and Edelman do not want the "naturality" of perverse sexuality to be acknowledged—quite the opposite—but they nonetheless operate as if the constitutive vocabulary of perversion can be reclaimed from its normative functioning for counter-normative purposes. If anything, then, these queer thinkers participate in something like a *reverse* reverse discourse, one that nonetheless remains in tight conceptual orbit around the perceived extremity and atypicality of perverse sexuality.

I would argue that the unifying feature of all of the aforementioned theories of fetishism and perversion is their reliance on strong drive-foundational theories of sexuality—particularly Freudian and Lacanain theories—that tend to conceive of

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[124] Ibid., 101.

sexuality as a distinct force that can be reduced to a single principle that can, in turn, have alternatingly perverse and normal manifestations. All of them, too, fail to thoroughly interrogate and instead leverage the perceived difference between the perverse and the normal for various illocutionary aims: to condemn the male gaze, to combat sexual objectification, to secure feminist terrain within the domain of psychoanalysis, to argue against reproductive futurism, to advocate for queer worldmaking through public sexual practices, etc. Indeed, these strong theories wield fetishism and perversion in the service of political goals whereas a weak theory of sexuality—as I have proposed in Chapter One and demonstrated in Chapter Two—can explore fetishism and perversion in a more descriptive way that would threaten to undermine the utility of those very categories. If fetishism has been a blind spot in feminist and queer theory, it has indeed been a strategic if not a conscious one, one that has foreclosed the possibility for rich descriptions of fetishistic sexuality in favor of strong theories of sexuality that shore up categories like perversion. As this dissertation comes to a close, I want to ask what it would mean to surrender this category altogether.

Perversion under Erasure

In her translator's preface to Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains Derrida's practice of placing certain terms *sous rature*, or "under erasure" as follows: "This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible.)" Spivak further describes placing something under erasure is a way to "mark" the "contortion" of reaching "unfamiliar conclusions" when "examining familiar

things."[125] Perversion, as an umbrella term that has traditionally included sexual fetishism, is certainly a familiar object in feminist and queer theory but when examined through a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality, it gives way "unfamiliar" conclusions. And for now, it remains necessary as a sort of *lingua franca* to discuss atypical forms of sexuality. My concluding strong claim in this dissertation, however, is that it is an inaccurate and eminently erasable term, especially when considered through the lens of a weak affective theory of sexuality.

The term "perversion" is deeply fraught, even in queer theory's favored classic texts on the subject. In the "Three Essays," for instance Freud summarizes perversion in this way: "… a disposition to perversions is an original and universal disposition of the human sexual instinct and … normal sexual behaviour is developed out of it as a result of organic changes and psychical inhibitions occurring in the course of maturation."[126] But the term perversion etymologically refers to "the action of turning aside from what is true or right; the diversion of something from its original and proper course, state, or meaning."[127] If perversion is, as Freud claims, "original" and "universal," then in what sense can it be a turning away from an "original" course? If normal sexual behavior stems from perversion, then why is normal sexual behavior not framed as a perversion? Perversion, put straightforwardly, is an inescapable paradox that is not salvageable for political purposes, no matter how hard it can bite when used as a critical pejorative and no matter how appealing its perceived transgressive charge might seem.

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[125] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, preface to *Of Grammatology*, by Jacques Derrida (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), xiv.
[126] Freud, "Three Essays," 231.
[127] "perversion, n.". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/141678 (accessed February 02, 2015).

As I argued via Foucault in the Introduction, sexual fetishism lies at the center of this paradoxical deployment of perversion. Fetishism provides the prototypical example of a sexual instinct "turning aside"[128] and, in so doing, it makes the drive "intelligible,"[129] enabling its deployment across all of human behavior as a normative concept. As I moved from Chapter One into Chapter Two, I demonstrated that a theory of sexuality that begins with affect rather than the drive can productively engage with the details—and, indeed, the "messy thickness"[130]—of a sexuality like sexual fetishism, apart from the questions that strong drive-foundational theories of sexuality are wont to ask: Is this sexuality normal or perverse? Where did it come from? What can be done about it? And in this chapter, I argued that feminist and queer studies have remained remarkably silent on the details of fetishism, opting instead to leverage strong theories of sexuality that continue to draw harsh dividing lines between normal and perverse sexuality.

In light of the fact that an affective theory of sexuality can productively engage with the field of human behavior that we traditionally understand as sexual without sharply delineating a line between the normal and the perverse—and without being overly concerned with delimiting the borders of sexuality, as I suggest in the Coda—what would it mean to place perversion under erasure, to mark its inaccuracy until it can be abandoned?

A weak affective theory of sexuality that places perversion under erasure need not suggest that perverse sexualities like sexual fetishism have, in fact, been normal all along, nor would it need to use perversion as a transformative "wedge," as Berlant and Warner do, along with other feminist and queer theorists. An affective theory of sexuality could

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[128] Ibid.
[129] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 153.
[130] Huffer, *Mad*, 36.

lose itself in the granular details of human sexuality, following along with its affective curves and articulating those curves in weak, idiosyncratic ways all while avoiding the monopolization of stronger theories of sexuality. These affective details are eclipsed when sexuality is seen merely as a political battleground or as the product of a drive or sexual instinct. To place perversion under erasure, then, would be to clear ground for an affective exploration of the very conceptual domain which perversion itself has placed under erasure.

This dissertation has revolved around a single question and has been concerned both with answering that question and creating the theoretical conditions for its asking. That question is: How does a fetish feel? In the Introduction, I observed that this question cannot be posed in the drive-foundational theories of sexuality in which the concept of sexual fetishism was first articulated. In Chapter One, I began to assemble an initial theoretical framework for the study of human sexuality that could provide the tools to ask this question. In Chapter Two, I began to demonstrate how this question could be answered in readings of a wide array of fetish literatures. And in this chapter, I have suggested that this is a question that is perhaps best answered weakly and descriptively, apart from the political and conceptual quagmires of theoretical attachments to perversion.

"How does a fetish feel?" is not a question with any single answer. But it is a question that requires a Tomkinsian commitment to understanding the importance of affect for human sexuality, one that requires us to feel fetishism in its local contexts instead of thinking it in the abstract or seeing it only for its political value. I began this dissertation with a simple claim: "Excitement is the primary affect of human sexuality."

To take that claim seriously would be to continue the work I have initiated here, to use Tomkins as a primary source for a theory of sexuality that resists both the orbit of perversion and the tautological explanatory modes of strong theory. Excitement *is* the primary affect of human sexuality. And although the answers to the question "How does a fetish feel?" are innumerable, the fact that this question can even be posed in a Tomkinsian theory of sexuality is a marker of its vitality rather than its vestigiality.

Coda
The Logic of the Heart

In discussing the relative freedom of the affect system—and more particularly the way in which affect itself can change one's subjective impression of an object—Tomkins writes:

> It is this somewhat fluid relationship between affects and their objects which offends human beings, scientists and everyman alike, and which is at the base of the rationalist's suspiciousness and derogation of the feeling life of man. The logic of the heart would appear not to be strictly Boolean in form, but this is not to say that it has no structure.[1]

The affect system is structured but any structure that requires the thousand plus pages of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*—a work that is at once recursive and discursive in its unfolding—might seem to be frustratingly fluid and malleable when compared with the seductive structure of drive-foundational theories of sexuality. Indeed, its unsystematicity may be all the more consternating to the "everyman" precisely because of its aspirations to systematicity. In the broader structure of this dissertation, what seemed like a set of discrete principles in the conceptual vacuum of Chapter One became diffused, discursive readings when I applied those principles to the material in Chapter Two, especially when compared to the sparse and purposeful use of sexual fetishism in the feminist and queer literature reviewed in Chapter Three. An affective theory of sexuality has certain defining parameters but, when put to practical use, it proves to be open-ended and sprawling.

In their introduction to *Shame and its Sisters*, Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank ask: "What does it mean to fall in love with a writer?"[2] Over the course of planning and writing this dissertation, I, too, have fallen in love not just with Silvan Tomkins but more specifically with his suggestive phrase "logic of the heart" with its curious juxtaposition

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[1] Tomkins, *Affect*, 74.
[2] Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame," 23.

of reason and emotion, structure and feeling, sense and sensation. To my mind, the phrase perfectly captures the underlying spirit of *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* and hopefully this project: a commitment to exploring the logic of affects—their distinction from one another, their innate activators, and their biological shape—balanced by an eagerness to explore the idiosyncratic gradations of that affective logic across the breadth of human experience. Articulating the "logic of the heart" does not entail reducing affect to a rigid code but, rather, to hold these two elements—"logic" and "heart"—close together until they can be seen as inextricably intertwined rather than mutually exclusive.

The central impulse of this dissertation has been to bring Tomkins' unique "logic of the heart" into conversation with forms of sexual variation, chiefly sexual fetishism. Under Tomkins' theory, the affective curves of sexual fetishism can come to light in a way they have not under drive-foundational theories of sexuality: Sneezing becomes a drama of excitement and enjoyment, buildup and release. Interest magnifies a swatch of rubber into an object of intense fascination. A Tomkinsian theory of sexuality does seem to be well-suited to the study of sexuality, to the way in which interest can affix itself "to anything which is exciting to the person who is experiencing it."[3] But, as I have also suggested throughout this dissertation, a curious thing happens when these weak theories of sexual variation are put into practice: the vocabulary used becomes more affective and less like the vocabulary that we would traditionally associate with the realm of human sexuality. It may be the case that sexuality has been rendered so synonymous with the concept of a drive or sexual instinct, that an affective theory of sexuality almost feels unrecognizable and perhaps, not even like a theory of capital-S Sexuality at all. As an affective theory of sexuality unfolds, it becomes apparent just how much the term

[3] Tomkins, *Affect*, 31.

"sexuality" has come to connote a certain power and force that seems incongruous with the weakness of a Tomkinsian theory of affect.

But, in the end, this blurring of the term sexuality may be one of the most promising consequences of constructing and working with an affective theory of sexuality. An affective theory of sexuality neither pathologizes forms of sexual variation nor does it participate in the "reverse discourse"[4] of refusing those pathologies by using their own terms. It lacks the tools to conceive of sexuality as a separate sphere of human behavior governed by a special mechanism but it *does* have the tools to think of sexuality as a complex entanglement of affects and objects, of physiology and psychology, of bodies and feelings. As we gain more descriptive tools to understand the domain of human behavior that we have traditionally circumscribed as "sexuality," what we mean by "sexuality" ironically becomes unclear. But this may mark one of those rare instances in which it might better to see the trees than the forest. Perhaps the benefit of an affective theory of sexuality lies in its ability to confuse what one can even mean by "sexuality."

Lost in this forest, in this logic of the heart, the term "fetish"—in its meaning of something "irrationally reverenced"[5]—is meaningless; that designation says more about a social context than an idiosyncratic, interested and affectively-motivated orientation toward an object, practice, or idea. The term "perversion," too, falls from stable use: sexuality cannot be conceived of as a principle that deviates but rather as a set of affects that can interact with objects in complex and plurivalent ways. And, ultimately, the term "sexuality" itself becomes a vague signifier: perhaps a marker of a certain intensity of affect or perhaps a form of affective expression that has acquired certain social meanings

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[4] Foucault, *Sexuality*, 101.
[5] "fetish, n. ". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/Entry/69611 (accessed January 15, 2015).

that shift over time or in different contexts. This project has been built on the expansion of Tomkins' sparse statements about sexuality in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* but there may be a reason for their scarcity in that text: the precise borders of sexuality are relatively unimportant in a theory that is more concerned with the affects underpinning it. Following Tomkins' logic of the heart requires a concomitant surrender of certainties, taxonomies, and pronouncements and a willingness to follow the affective curves of sexuality, whatever that is, and wherever they lead.

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